Stealing of Victories

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Stealing of Victories

by orphan_account

Summary

There is a determination curled in his stomach; determination mixed with a crippling defeat, but Will was determined to see this through. He felt defeated and betrayed, but at least he can choose how it ends.

Notes

This idea has been bugging me a bit now, ever since I read a story called “Low” where Will tried to commit Suicide in Season 2. So in part because it won't leave me alone and because I quite enjoyed what I read from “Low” though it was never finished and taken down some time ago I figured why not. I apologize ahead of times if the characters are butchered horribly.

Chapter 1

The emotion was- is something Will Graham understands all too well. He understood others and at the best of times he understood his own as well. Yes, there was times when the world choked him with the attention and the emotions carelessly flung out and pushed against everything in the blast zone. It was why Will is careful of who he lets in his life and what he read or listened to. Everything had to be controlled, it was why his house is-was the way that it was.

But as it stood, Will was faced with the impact of his failure and his mistakes.

He was not careful enough on who he let into his life. And because he was sick, he did not protect himself from threats Will liked to think that he would have seen from the start.

The consequences of his failures were scarring on his brain from Encephalitis, the death of a girl who didn't deserve it and being betrayed by someone he thought was his friend. Someone Will found himself actually enjoying the presence of. Hannibal Lecter. His betrayer. His former friend. Will actually enjoyed being around him, he wasn't so loud and he didn't overpower Will's empathic disorder. Though it was Dr. Lecter who first called it that.

Will's curse, his empathy was a disorder. Something wrong, because that was what most thought of disorders being. Something wrong. Something imperfect. Something that needed to be cured.

And Will, the entire time of knowing the man was eating out of his hands.

Looking back on it now, Will felt disgusted.

He was such a fool! But then, so was everyone else. They didn't see what Will saw, with his mind clear now. He knows that it was Dr. Lecter who put him here, who killed Abigail Hobbs and killed those people. Will knows this as a fact. Dr. Lecter was the one who did this to Will, though he has yet to discover how.

“Lost in thought?” Hannibal's question sounded innocent enough, and perhaps it is. But that was beside the point.

“Not lost. Not anymore.” Will corrected, continuing as calm as his own twisting emotions would allow him to, “I used to hear the thoughts inside my own skull with the same tone, timbre and accent as if the words were coming out of my mouth.” And this was the truth because this was how it was. Was it not like this for everyone to hear their own voice?

“And now?” He was curious; Will hated that Hannibal was curious and so open about it in such a clear manner.

“Now my inner voice sounds like you. I can't get you out of my head.” Will said, it was horrible and wrong, and he couldn't find peace or isolation within himself without having to go all the way.

The smugness just buried under the polite portrayal Dr. Lecter has perfected was as clear as day for Will. Now that he see's, it was so obvious. Everything he has ever said and done was a blatant confession and everyone including Will was so blind to it. And as it stood, Will was powerless in here to do anything about it. All he could do was sit on his hard cot and rethink of everything.

"Friendship can sometimes involve a breach of individual separateness." Hannibal pointed out, and Will felt anger curl in his stomach. Anger and a sense of being violated.

"A blurring of self and friend?" Will's words were surprisingly steady even as Hannibal confirmed this with a simple word. It gave Will the ability to speak his mind further, "You're not my friend. The light from friendship won't reach us for a million years. That's how far away from friendship we are." And of course, Hannibal took it like a professional as he twisted it back onto Will and Will found himself being petty with short answers and confirmations.

Will let his head fall back and fought off a sting of emotion that twisted his stomach into knots. His dinner cold at his side. This will be the third meal he skipped; he will have to eat this one to keep everyone off his back.

"Our conversations, Will, were only ever about you opening your eyes to the truth of who you are." Hannibal seemed insistent without being persistent about it, trying to get a point across to Will no doubt. Not that Will wanted to trust or accept the words of someone who has done this to him. Whether it was out of malice or sadism or even for his own amusement was unimportant now. It didn't change the fact that it was done to Will and done to him by Hannibal.

It was easier than Will expected to get up and find himself close to the bars staring straight at Hannibal. Sure of himself.

"What you did to me is in my head and I'll find it. I'm going to remember, Dr. Lecter, and when I do there will be a reckoning." Will knows that the anger in his voice was clearly understood. It burned Will though that Hannibal seemed proud at that and nods. Even going so far as telling Will that he had faith in Will.

It left Will wanting to lash out and scream and yell and throw things. But he couldn't. He was trapped and forced to stay here.

It was his need to find things out that had him considering going to Dr. Chilton in order to find everything he was missing in his own mind. Surely the arrogant man would know of methods that Will can use. Regardless if they're legal or not. Will had to know and it was that anger and need that helped him eat that night's supper despite it tasting like ash in his mouth.

~ Break ~

Sleep never came easy, anger didn't help him sleep. And his situation only seemed to be getting worse and everything looks to be increasingly hopeless. Everyone suspected him to be a killer and accepted Dr. Lecter into the fold and believed him to be an innocent man who has never taken a life before. And nothing Will is doing convinced them otherwise. The

lawyers were all FBI issued and useless, so Will kept firing them. It was this that brought Alana back to see him and it was this moment that it really sunk in that she believed that he was a killer.

That he killed those people!

“Then I'll find you a lawyer who's not affiliated with the FBI.” Alana offered and Will was genuinely grateful for that, it would be better than using what's been thrown at him to use. And they all seemed to believe him to be guilty as well, how could they fight for him when they think he's guilty?

“What defense do you think I have?” It was curiosity that drove him to ask her; Alana was always smart, and he could always trust her to be as honest with him as she could.

“Automatism. Allows a defendant to argue they shouldn't be held criminally liable for their actions due to unconsciousness.” And just like that, she crushed part of him. With one word, he gave her room to clarify, “Neurological dysfunctions like Encephalitis can be considered acceptable excusing condition.” Will tried to keep the bitterness out of him.

“Presuming I did it.” Will knows she heard his emotions in that one, but thankfully kept a straight face.

“Your mind was on fire. You didn't have any control of what you were doing, much less remember doing it.” A logical explanation to go with her style of thinking in regards to his supposed guilt.

It was Alana who gave him enough of an idea that he could use to gain back memories he was missing and how this was done to him. Why he was here beyond the doings of one Doctor Hannibal Lecter. Though her words still echoed loudly.

“What if you remember how you did it?”

It was a risk he was willing to take and it worked a bit, but it wasn't enough so perhaps he would have to go to Dr. Chilton after all. The man would love to get inside of Will's mind and in turn he no doubt would practically brag to Dr. Lecter on such a turn of event. What the doctor would do then is beyond Will.

~ Break ~

Will wondered if Dr. Chilton would agree happily or if he would be skeptical of it? Either way, with or without him Will would work for a way to to regain his memories. In the meantime, going along with everything for the most part, but still wanting at least one person to believe him. At least one person to try to help him. Was that too much to ask? At some point Will thinks he is going to ask Dr. Chilton to ban Dr. Lecter from seeing him, it would be a nice thought that he would be able to keep his betrayer away from him. It would be another way for Will to think of other reasons why he was so upset with Dr. Lecter, besides the fact that the man was Will's friend.

There was more to it than that. Even more than the fact that Hannibal murdered Abigail.

In the end, it came from one Kade Prunell that showed him that he would have to save himself. His conversation with her was enlightening at the very least. He was a dirty spot on the FBI's public image and she was trying to clean it away. Offering Will deals in exchange for a comfortable living in a cage for crimes that he didn't do. It only seemed to feed that sensation growing in him that he was defeated. Will wasn't sure what to do with that. So he kept pushing forward. Always pushing forward because there was nothing else he could do now.

Or was there?

The seed of an idea started to grow in Will's mind. One that he pushed aside because that would be admitting defeat, wouldn't it? And Will did successfully caste that seed of a thought aside and managed to continue on with his minuscule living. Fishing in his mind, trying to regain memories. It was one of these fishing trips that Jack disrupted with a visit and an idle conversation that quickly descended into something that only left Will feeling defeated in a small way.

“You know that's meaningless.” Jack seemed tired, but his words were firm. The conversation they were having was no doubt something he was regretting now and Will didn't care if he did. Will was trying to force him to see the truth of the matter. To have someone believe that Will was innocent! Because the fact of the matter was, was that he is innocent!

“Not for me.” Will made sure his certainty was heard and continued with that same conviction, “He did it so well. There wasn't even an orgy of evidence. There was just enough to convince you.” Turn Jack against Will too!

“We investigated your claims about Dr. Lecter. Thoroughly. We've gone over every fiber of stitch of clothing. We took his DNA. We took his fingerprints. We found nothing.” Will felt himself sinking at Jacks words. They let Dr. Lecter in, and it only seemed to work against Will like everything else.

Jack, as it seemed at this point, was just another person who doesn't believe Will and just like that he was feeling even more isolated.

“You stood over a dead girl's body in that field and described yourself to me.” Jack sounded so sure of himself, and it hurt.

“I described Hannibal Lecter.” Will wished Jack would just believe him already.

“I can't hear this anymore.” Jack seemed tired; he was giving up on Will it seemed. And Will didn't know until now how much that could hurt him.

“I'm not the intelligent psychopath you're looking for.” Will's words were sure just like Jack's good bye was tired. Will had to watch him walk away and leave Will behind. Like everyone seemed to be doing slowly. Will let his words chase Jack out of the building as he said, “May not believe me now... you will.”

A quiet voice kept telling him that they won't. Dr. Lecter was far too thorough and Will was so successfully put in a place where everyone didn't believe him as you would doubt a

madman or a killer. And it was such a defeating sensation that Will felt cold day and night. When he slept he felt suffocated and when he made a deal with Dr. Chilton to regain his memories he felt crushed. It was funny how a few conversations and bits of news could do that to you.

But that was the cost of being empathic as he was and so open to everyone's emotions and thoughts it often felt like. That and being trapped in a cell that reminded him of a dungeon with a draft and little sunlight, it was enough to make him feel hopeless. And with every memory he got back, Will was closer to what happened between himself and Hannibal, it only got worse.

Because with those memories came thoughts and musings and realizations. And Will vomited when he regained the latest one. Somewhere along the way, Will started to consider options but often too distracted by his sickness to single his thought filled with emotions.

Somewhere he started considering having something more than just being friends.

After that, keeping food down was hard because how could he be so dependant and needy that he would go out of his own preferences and mindset to even think of something like that?! And now, with everything else that has happened Will was feeling like his heart was breaking. Will found himself asking Dr. Chilton two days after that realization for a method he could do for getting feelings and emotions out of the way. And the doctor seemed to preen at the aspect of being asked for advice, shockingly he gave good advice.

So Will settled for one method of writing it down in a letter format.

The paper was standard and the pencil dull so it couldn't be used as a weapon. Will was surprised they didn't give him a crayon. With what he needed, Will sat down and started to write about how he felt. About how this betrayal has cost him. It came to no surprise to himself that the letter was to Dr. Lecter. Everything lately was about him.

Will spent all afternoon writing that letter, only stopping once to eat the dinner that was given to him. The letter was addressed to Dr. Lecter, the primary focus of his attention when not digging for his own emotions. Looking down at it, only two pages were filled with neat writing and Will could feel how drained he was. But he kept going, he wrote everyone something. Alana. Jack. Even Beverly who came by for help, more so to see him it seemed like. But Will didn't blame her, too much energy was being spent on trying to fight for his own innocence.

A fight he was failing.

His trial was going to start soon, his lawyer was smug and didn't care too much for what Will had to say.

Will knows that it won't end well for him because Dr. Lecter was too good at framing him and no one believes him. Who would fight for him? Tere was no one now. And Will, he couldn't fight for himself in his situation. Regained memories were not going to help him because it wasn't evidence and everyone is about evidence.

So that seed he had some time ago came back.

He could very well steal Dr. Lecter's victory, or that stolen victory could be the final piece of the man's success. It didn't matter because this was Will's choice. The only option he could make here because it was only himself now.

He was betrayed.

He was abandoned.

He was alone and isolated.

So Will figured, why not. Alana will care for his dogs or make sure they find good homes. With a sense of calm blanketing over his shoulders, Will got up and headed to the bed. It would take some work, but within the following days, he got a piece of metal from underneath the mattress. It was a bit of a shock that no one stopped him. But that was a blessing there. With a calmness, he wasn't expecting Will rolled down his left sleeve and eyed the unmarked skin.

There, he will cut there.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Above him was the sound of birds chirping and below him the sound of water. Will smiled as he opened his eyes, in his hands was a fishing pole and Will knows this river intimately. He has visited here often, and his best memories were created here. When it was just him and his Father, during simpler times for the both of them. They could pretend that the world didn't exist and it was just them and this river.

He could pretend and imagine that he got to share this river with Abigail.

Because of this, it isn't hard to picture her standing next to him dressed in something similar to him. It'll keep her warm because the water is always cold. They spoke to each other, and here Will could behave the way he wanted with her, and she could be happy to see him. Something that never happened in reality, she was like most other people.

And most people were not happy to see Will. Will knows this; he knows it's because of how he comes across as well as the fact that he was a bit of an asshole at times. Will knows this.

But still, here he could pretend.

Here he was never sent to a hospital Jack promised to never leave him in. But did. Where everyone left him to rot and no one believed him when he pleaded with them to see the truth.

Abigail wanted to bring the dogs next time.

Will agreed.

The conversation continued about her schooling until she looked increasingly troubled. Will was concerned, so he brought it up without getting an answer. It was now that Will saw blood starting to pour from her neck, the scar seemed to open as though the seams were coming apart. Will wanted to panic, and he wanted to go to her, help her and save her. But all he could do was stand as she pointed to his wrist.

Blood! His blood!

His wrist was split open. Will felt his heart speed up. He was bleeding out of a cut he barely remembered making beyond a decision of stealing his ending in a situation written against his will.

Will could do nothing as he watched Abigail collapse in the water as though non-existent strings no longer existed to hold her up anymore. She just floated there despite the river moving around her. Carrying the blood that poured from her throat with it. Only now it wasn't only from her throat, but from where her ear should have been as well.

Will felt like he was going to vomit, like there was something solid lodged in his throat leading straight up and out of his mouth.

Will wanted to scream and yell for it to stop. But that blockage kept him from doing nothing more than stand there in his river and bleed himself. Feeling even more hopeless as everything faded around him.

Will was forced to face the harsh realities as blood coated his mind reminding him of his failures and his poor judgements in people. And to be honest, Will expected his hand to be just bandaged and to be once again trapped in his dungeon again. Isolated and alone with nothing but bleak hopelessness to keep him company. Left to rot until a judge following along with everyone else sentences Will to death.

But where he was instead was a hospital. There were two orderlies at the door. They were there for obvious reasons.

The truth of this situation and the cruel reality is that he survived and he was still a prisoner.

“Will.” Jack's voice, Will focused and ignored that voice as he stared out the window to his left. At least he could see the sun here while still in bed. The only time he got to see the sun or daylight before was when he was brought out to perform or to be questioned.

“I thought it would be best if it was only me here to speak with you when you wake up. They have a counselor available if you-” Jack made a bitter sound, most likely directed at himself and this situation before forcing himself to continue speaking, “What the hell happened man, why did you do this?” Jack's voice still sounded and it came from Will's right. There was exhaustion, anger as well as a rather thick cocktail of emotions lacked throughout each word. It could cause a headache if Will had to deal with that for very long. It was evident by the statement, Jack wanted to know what happened.

Will didn't want to provide an answer, as he was trying to accept the unavoidable. He was still alive, and he is still trapped in this horrible situation and still set to lose everything. It won't do to try to get everyone to believe him again; they will easily explain this away as guilt being the cause. Despite the fact that the only guilt Will felt was that he failed to save Abigail. She never deserved any of this. And neither did Will.

But here they were.

A sigh before, “I read your letters.” The statement was enough to make Will look at Jack; he seemed older as he sat in rumpled clothing and slouched in a chair next to Will, leaning against the side of the bed slightly. If Will had it in him, he would almost feel sorry for the man. But how could he when he knows he has no ally in Jack.

“Of course you did.” Will bites out, his own bitterness unmistakable. It's evidence and no doubt they could look through it to see if there's a cause or something to use in those letters. And they could keep looking, because there is nothing in there that could make him guilty of anything he's not. And this wasn't a suicide attempt, or at least that's what Will was intent on saying.

Even though in the end Will knows that he's wrong.

“I gave a copy of each letter to Dr. Lecter and Dr. Bloom, to see if they could find a way to help you. We'll ge-” Jack was trying, Will can almost appreciate it but it was far too late and the fact that Jack let Hannibal read those letters left Will feeling mortified because he remembers exactly what he wrote and it made Will feel even more vulnerable than he did previously.

How could Jack do that to him!

“Don't say we'll get through this Jack, we won't get through this because there's no us here. This is just me trying to escape a bad situation that has no exit because no one believes me anyway.” Will said, the anger in his words had him sounding very much alive even though he knows in due time he won't be feeling alive for much longer because why should he. Nothing he says or does will change anything.

“I don't want-” Jack started, and Will knows what he's going to say. Of course, Jack would say that he believes Will to be guilty and them getting through anything didn't involve Will's innocence being found.

“Then don't. Just go, Jack. Go home. Once they give me a clean bill of health I'll be taken back to *that* place and everything will commence from there.” Will forced out, looking away and pointedly ignoring Jack as best as he could even with the other standing up and seemingly standing over Will. It left a shadow that had Will feeling cold.

“Just- Just go Jack.” Will found himself saying and heard a quiet sigh from Jack as he did what Will wanted him to do. And that was leave. Will gone back to staring out the window and just laying there. He ignored the doctors that came in to check the bandage with the orderly to keep an eye on Will. Will is, after all, a criminal according to everyone, a killer to be exact. So it was protocol and Will didn't give them any reason to panic as he remained as cooperative as he could and equally as unresponsive as possible but only so far as to keep them from declaring him in a catatonic state.

As the day carried on, Will had other visitors once they received permission. But only three people. Alana, Hannibal, and Beverly. All at separate times and Will only paid Beverly any mind; she was innocent in all this. Will didn't try to convince her of his innocence. He suspected that she wouldn't believe him either.

It was well in the afternoon before a few more orderlies arrived and Dr. Chilton. They came to get him and bring him back to that place. And Will was genuinely surprised that he didn't have a panic attack or anything along that line as they strapped him back and put the face mask back on. He hated being bound by anything, more now than ever. It left him feeling cold and vulnerable, wanting nothing more than to break free and flee as quick and as far as he could.

Dr. Chilton looked far from amused, in fact, he seemed like he was embarrassed by the entire situation and Will wondered if he would be suffering some repercussion from that? It wouldn't surprise him in the long run, but still, it had him cautious and wished it was possible to keep his distance.

The ride was silent, and no one looked at Will. Shame, embarrassment, and anger choked the air, and Will did what he could to ignore it.

It was when he got back to BSHCI that any words were said and they were about him and spoken as though he wasn't there. It made Will wonder how the man managed to get his license. Not that he wanted them to talk to him, but still. They didn't do well in regards to the whole matter of bedside manners.

When they arrived, that Will noticed they took him to another cell that wasn't his. There was no beds or tables. No toilet or sink either. Instead of bars, there was glass, and the walls and floor were padded. The ceiling wasn't, but that was because Will would be unable to reach it anyway.

“Considering your suicidal risks, this cell would be safest for you and you will be monitored day and night to ensure that you'll be safe from yourself.” Dr. Chilton explained as soon as Will pushed inside of his new cage and the door closed behind him. Will felt weak as it was, but he didn't show it. Will looked around, confirming that there was nothing here to relieve himself with either. Dr. Chilton seemed to notice and gleefully told Will that he'd have five times a day to use the bathroom. And that will be supervised as well.

Will just found a corner to sit in. All Will could do was stare at his bandaged wrist, all the while feeling cold.

What should he do now?

What could he do now?

“Meals will be served at the same time, please eat them. You need to keep up your strength for your upcoming court.” Dr. Chilton's words stuck around even after the man left, leaving the taping sound of his cane to follow the man as he left. Will wondered how they would force him to eat if he decided to refuse to eat.

In the upcoming days, Will found out that his trial was postponed until he was no longer on suicide watch. They wanted him fit mentally and physically to go through the court proceedings. Beyond that, nothing. Will got his five times to use the bathroom, and he had his three meals a day. Each time only eating less than half of what was there. It was enough to keep them off his back about eating. Dr. Chilton seemed less and less impressed, especially since Will refused to say a single word since he was brought back to this place and once again trapped within its walls.

All because of Hannibal Lecter and because no one believed in Will's innocence.

So why speak when no one listens to what he has to say anyway? Will only spoke to Abigail and that was when they were alone or in Will's mind. She was always concerned when Will didn't eat much and Will had to remind her that first of all, she was dead and second she was a child herself. Her concern grew as Will took the bandages off of his wrist and examined his stitched up wrist.

TThough this time he didn't get a chance to do anything as two orderlies spotted him and intervened leaving Will bound in a straight jacket to prevent him from doing anything more than simply looking at it. The medication they injected him made it hard to focus and harder still to move beyond the corner he took refuge.

“We'll make it through this Will.” Abigail's voice felt so far away, and Will wondered if it would come closer when he closes his eyes and goes back to his river. But even that was hard to do with the medication flowing through his veins. Like toxins.

Time passed slowly for Will; lawyers came both defense and prosecutor. Wishing and needing to see for themselves to inform the judge what they were seeing and if it was safe to proceed with the court. They got negative answers, and Will felt sneers coming from them. It was this time that Will turns his back on them and tries to escape to his river with varying success.

One day, however, he gained a new visitor.

“Hello Will.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this story took so long to be updated. I wanted to finish another story first. But now that it's done I can devote myself to this one.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

This was wrong and unfamiliar, but it reflected what he was feeling and his situation entirely. His riverbed was dry, the trees bare and the sky above him gray. There were no signs of life and what he could find was in the process of being claimed by death. And all Will could do was stand there with his fishing gear on and fishing rod in hand, yet unable to do anything more than observe and wait. It wasn't fair, but this was how it was in his head now. Has been since he returned to Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. A place he didn't deserve to be! But here he was.

Abigail wasn't here, she rarely was. Will thinks she hates how sad and dead everything was. So she didn't visit him here, it was mostly reserved for when he was back in his latest prison.

So Will stood alone. Until the unmistakable sound of something coming his way. Hooves! Will knows what to expect, and a part of him didn't want to turn around. But it was small enough to resist as Will did just that and found himself face to face with a large stag who's color was wrong and fur didn't fit right. Feathers. Black. Blood. Antlers sharpened like knives with eyes that reminded Will of gems the color of blood.

“Hello Will.” It seemed to say without uttering a single word. And all Will can do was shudder as his heart skipped a beat as he stood there before it. It was odd to be so afraid of a beast yet want to run his hands through its fur and feathers to see just how it felt.

Embrace it even. If that was even possible.

After all, this was his stag. Will remembers it now. But there was no time for Will to pay attention to it.

He needed to focus!

Focus. Will had to remind himself to do just that, after all, it was important considering who his visitor is. One that will require Will's attention more so than others. So, focus. Pulling away from his imagined beast, Will did just that. Attention directed to his visitor as Will moved as careful as he could while wearing a straightjacket. They only take it off when the deem it safe enough to do so, considering what they feared Will would do with it off. And that was only when he needed to eat, bathe or use the restroom.

Will had to remind himself to breathe, to focus on something other than his thirst. He was so thirsty! Inward, however, Will's mind still felt as stained with both his and Abigail's blood. His vulnerability became apparent to Will, given who was in front of him and what state Will himself. It was smothering, and it left Will agitated and upset because there were too many times he can remember spending time in the presence of this man in a vulnerable state thinking he was perfectly safe. That this was someone he could trust even when Will couldn't trust himself.

Will even let himself imagine that he finally made a friend.

Only for him to be fooled. Tricked and lied to!

Betrayed!

Abandoned!

Hurt by.

Closing his eyes, Will counted to five and wished that when he opened his eyes, he would be alone. But opening his eyes only left Will with the realization that it truly was Hannibal Lecter was in front of him on the other side of the glass of Will's latest prison. If only he this could have been a hallucination brought on by the medication choking him from the inside.

Will leaned against the side of his prison and as far back as possible. Making sure to face his former doctor directly. Here Hannibal couldn't touch him, at least physically. In every other way, there were possibilities that Hannibal can find.

“I read your letters, Will. Jack is hoping that I would find an answer to explain what happened and why it has happened.” Hannibal was calm, facial expression painted with concern. A look that no doubt took years to perfect. And it nearly was, unless you know where to look. And Will does, because he doesn't only see painted on concern but curiosity and even resentment buried in those bloodied eyes. Will didn't know why there was resentment. Were there rules in place that Will didn't know?

The thought of that possibility sent a surge of sickening glee through Will. Because it means that he was going in the right direction and he had almost succeeded in winning this round. Because who cared if it cost him his life, in the end, everyone would see and everyone would know and Will can rest easy for it. Such a thought, however, caused a sad look to cross Abigail's face, one that Will had to ignore pointedly. He couldn't even dare to acknowledge her presence because a part of him was afraid that Hannibal would take her other ear and put it down his throat. Take her away from him too. Will made a note to find a way to clean her shirt for her. How and where he didn't know. But he doubted she would want to remain in bloodied shirts forever. And she had no more blood to shed.

The expression Will can give, the only answer to what Hannibal had said was a look. One filled with bitterness, anger, and loathing. There must have been a considerable amount of other things there. Of that, Will is certain. But he didn't have it in him to care beyond knowing it was there.

Will didn't gain a comment regarding that; instead, he felt the weight of calculating eyes. Will couldn't meet them, so he busied himself by noting the orderlies off to the side.

“I would very much like to help you. If you would allow me to.” Hannibal's words made Will want to scream and yell and throw nonexistent things at the glass of his cage. Through accusations that there was no help for him, not from Hannibal because it was Hannibal who put him here.

Instead, not a word was said, or a twitch given. The lack of response was not enough to deter the fact that Will was carefully studied.

When will turned his attention back to Hannibal, he noted that the man had his head tilted slightly. Eyes narrowed in the slightest manner that you wouldn't notice if you hadn't seen him do it. It reminded Will of something not human; it was more reptilian or even avian. Either way, it wasn't something Will would deem normal for a person. Not that he was one to make that sort of decisions.

“Why suicide Will?” Hannibal finally asked, it was possibly the most burning question Will's former doctor had been dealing with the moment he had found out. But that wasn't as important, what is important was the fact that Will could hear the accusation in the tone just below the surface. It was so close to the surface that it could be seen with the common gaze. Those three words weren't carefully chosen and people friendly. To Will, this was more honest and with that honesty came a sharp cutting affect that reminded Will of kitchen knives sharpened to perfection.

“I'm thirsty.” These two words were chosen, his first words since the hospital where his life was saved against his will and his victory slipped through his fingers. Will watched Hannibal look around for a moment before turning to one of the orderlies. Despite straining, Will couldn't hear what was being spoken of between them, but the orderly was the one who walked away.

It was a weird sensation, to be observing a situation like this one. It almost felt like Will was standing on the side staring at himself crumbled in a corner bound and helpless while relying on his betrayer to fetch him the simplest of requirements to live. The otherworldly experience didn't stop as somehow Hannibal gained access to the room and approached him with a plastic cup filled with water and a straw.

It left Will feeling even more vulnerable as he had to remain in place and obey when that straw was being held within his range. Only withheld just long enough to keep it from Will while having it tantalizingly close.

“It's rude to not answer questions.” In those words, Will could hear the tone of reprimand and disapproval. But there was a surprisingly lack of discontent to keep the apparent rudeness as a lasting offense. Those words were just a small action towards correcting behavior that wasn't acceptable to the man crouched in front of him. It made Will want to retaliate and push the doctor further.

But he couldn't. Not right now, if ever.

Instead, Will pulled his attention to the water. Will wanted the water, and Hannibal wanted the answer to his question.

It was evident to himself that he didn't want to give Hannibal his answer. But he knew that the situation could always be twisted to ensure that Will won't get what he wants without giving Hannibal what he wanted. It was cruel and horrible, and it left Will feeling sick and wanting out!

It wasn't fair!

But that was Will's life. When did life ever be fair to him? Look at where he was!

So because of this, Will had to think, and he had to wonder what sort of answer he could give Hannibal that won't cost himself too much. If that was even possible, when everything was exhausting.

“Why not?” Will said with a shrug, and noted that the answer was not good enough, so Will had to continue, “The evidence is against me, no one believes me here or anywhere. They look at me and see either something that was broken or they see a monster who should kill. There is only one outcome of that court, and that's my murder.” Will didn't realize how drained that would make him. And he hated that it did because who was crouched near him and offering him water for his answer. A reward, like what Will used to do with his dogs when they did something right.

His dogs! He missed his dogs!

He wants to go home, but he can't.

As soon as Will was finished with the water, he pulls back and watches as Hannibal does the same with the cup and straw.

“That explains your sense of hopelessness Will, but not why you tried to kill yourself. Try a bit harder please.” Hannibal stated, not moving further away and Will felt pierced by his gaze and given where they were there was no way to slip free of it. Will shook his head and gave a sharp sound. Of course, that answer wouldn't be good enough. Despite the reward and response, it was clear that Hannibal Lecter wanted to cut more from him.

Because of course he did.

“What more do you want me to say?! I tried to take my fate back into my hands and away from you! But I apparently failed because here I am! So congratulations Doctor, you win. You get to watch me jump through more hoops until I get sentenced to death because we both know that that's the only outcome for me!” Will found himself yelling and noticed movement behind Hannibal; the orderlies are making themselves known. It was a warning. They weren't supposed to be letting anyone who wasn't employed here beyond those doors without explicit permission from their boss.

Will wondered what would happen if he kept pushing?

Not that his thought process was able to stay on that route, not as he felt a hand rest against his cheek. It caused Will to jerk back slightly and the orderlies to shift forward.

Perhaps Will shouldn't have given that answer? Because he could have easily given away too much information. Could that be used to explain that Will wasn't suicidal and the court could commence? Or did he just give Hannibal another way in so he could strip Will of whatever else he wished? If that was the case, Will wanted to know just how long would it take for him to be nothing more than an empty vessel ready to be devoured.

What did shock Will though, was that Hannibal was satisfied. Though not completely, there were parts there that held resentment twisting with anger. He did give Hannibal something more to use. It only made him want to redouble his effort. Or kill him. But Will didn't know if he had the energy for the latter.

“Sir. We really have to ask you to remove your hand and leave the cell.” One of the orderlies said, closer than the other one. Will didn't look at them; he was far too trapped by Hannibal and his thoughts on the matter. What was going to be done to him now? And what could he do to stop that before it happened?

Seconds or perhaps minutes had passed before Hannibal complied, and Will noted that it was on his own time rather than theirs. Frustration was the most visible reaction as they followed him out of Will's prison. Hannibal left soon after, but not before promising to visit Will again. Will wanted to tell him not to bother. To stay away, instead, he said nothing but glare towards the floor in front of him. Will didn't move from that spot until someone showed up with his dinner which ended up having to be taken away because Will refused to eat it.

He couldn't stomach anything right now, and the moment he was allowed to shower he scrubbed his cheek raw. Angry at how warm it felt and how familiar it was being touched by Hannibal. How many times did Hannibal Lecter touch him without knowing it! Especially during the times where he blacked out. What else was done to Will beyond seizures and lost time?

That afternoon when Will went for his last shower he was handled by the same orderlies who were present when Hannibal was visiting. They must have gotten into trouble because it was Will who paid the price. The bruises won't be anywhere visible, and a phone book helped hide some of the evidence.

Nobody mentioned his curled up form as he was returned to his prison. Nobody but Matthew Brown, an orderly who was the kindest to Will. Will confessed that afternoon that he blamed Hannibal for all of this and emotion took over long enough to provoke the young orderly to embrace Will with violent promises and toxic requests of aiding him to become another killer.

Chapter End Notes

I hope that the meeting between was okay. It'll be delved into deeper as the chapters go. But not much could be done or said in the presence of two orderlies and listening devices (Dr. Chilton's a bit nosey after all).

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The following week after Hannibal's visit, Will found himself isolated and without any company beyond the usual orderlies and Dr. Chilton who questioned Will in regards to written reports of him putting up a struggle a week ago or the many attempts to gauge where Will was emotional. If he could be taken off of suicide watch or not. Will did his best not to acknowledge anything, especially after he found out that it was made to sound like the shower incident where he was used as a punching bag was his fault.

And it was because of this, that had Dr. Chilton push for Will's court to continue citing that if he had the mental faculty to show aggression in such manners than he would be able to withstand appearing in court. Will wanted to refute that; he didn't want to go there and sit as everyone pointed fingers at him and calling him a monster or a killer when Will didn't do anything wrong beyond trusting the wrong person. It hurt worse than he thought it would as his lawyer seemed pleased to finally get on with things so he could be done with this case and move onto the next. The prosecutor was the same.

Everyone must be wanting to get on with the case because that's exactly where Will found himself by the end of the week. Sitting in court and feeling smothered as he was put on display for crimes he did not commit. Will let his eyes travel to his bandaged wrist for a moment and wondered if he would be quick enough to open it right here and now. But no move was made towards it as witness after witness came forth. It felt endless even as it turned out only two people so far and they were only moving onto the third witness.

Hannibal Lecter.

Will felt himself glare at the man even as he declared them friends. Will wanted to scream at him then, correct them on that because friends wouldn't do this to friends. At the same time, Will came face to face with the fact that ever since Hannibal's last visit Will felt more starved of attention and company and even as he sat in the court listening to Hannibal's testimony Will can still feel the warmth of his touch on his cheek. It left him bitter and felt like he was betraying himself. It took everything not to start sobbing or screaming at himself and the entire court.

By the end of the day, as he was transferred back to BSHCI until tomorrow when the court will continue, Will was exhausted and all but collapsed in his prison as soon as his restraints were taken off, and he was allowed to get back into his prison uniform instead of an ill-fitting monkey suite. It was a relief that he saw Abigail waiting for him in his cushioned prison. Her and the nightmarish stag. Will placed himself at the farthest point in the cell and closes to them. Sleep didn't come easy that night, though it was seldom that it did.

Will was slightly surprised that he was still kept in this cushioned prison and wondered out loud why he wasn't back in his old cell. It turned out, Abel Gideon was transferred back and placed there. Will hasn't met him yet, not since Will attempted to kill him outside of Alana's

house. The biggest question was why Abel Gideon was back here after what he's done to Dr. Chilton.

“Maybe Chilton wants to get even? It's possible you know.” Abigail suggested, leaning over the back of the nightmarish stag who seemed perfectly content to sleeping next to Will. It was only a thought, considering what Abel forced Dr. Chilton to go through and given what Dr. Chilton's done in his race to fame. It wouldn't be that much of a stretch in imagination to picture scenario's that involved revenge of any sort.

Will studied Abigail's appearance, her shirt was now clean, but her neck was still open and her ear still missing. But she smiled brightly for Will, always reminding him that she's dead, so she doesn't miss her ear or her blood. She was all right with being here, Will's ghost. It was enough reason for Will to sneak in a shy and tiny smile at that. Those were quiet moments at night when it was just them that he held precious because they were the only moments of comfort now. All because Will didn't go in anymore, his river was dry, and everything seemed dead. His mind stained with blood, and it was no longer a refuge he recognizes.

The worst case scenario was that he would have to re-imagine a place to hide when he goes in. Build himself a memory palace somehow. If he had time to attempt in the first place. Something he doubts because he knows what's going to happen now that his trial has resumed and given the evidence neatly in place. Will would be found guilty because Will refused to take any other plea available to him regardless of what his half there lawyer and his so called friends said. And when he is found guilty, Will knows that either he would get life in prison and spend his days here at the mercy of Dr. Chilton and his orderlies. Or-

Or he would be sentenced to death and would then have to wait for them to murder him.

Sometime after his return to his prison, Will heard the clicking of a cane with another set of footsteps. Will can only guess who's they were. Heavy set and with a driving purpose that reminded Will of a bulldozer. Will didn't bother moving closer to the glass or further away if that were even possible. Instead, he remained sitting there and waiting for his visitors, and he was sure they were there for Will because there wasn't anyone this far down the hall. And he was sure it wasn't an orderly or two with tonight's supper. If that were the case, a trolly would be used.

Soon enough Will was proven right as he found himself faced with Dr. Chilton who was accompanied by Jack.

“Will.” It was a gruff greeting, stern and unpleasant for Will. He knows that Jack wasn't here so much to see how he was doing, instead, there was something Jack wanted to know and Jack was here to speak with Will to get whatever answers he needed. Will was familiar with this. After all, this was Jack. Will made the decision not to say a word yet, instead listened as Jack pushed forward in his questions about orderlies Will has come into contact and the two who filed the report about Will's acting out.

“Why are you asking these questions, Jack?” Will was confused, he wanted to know, and by some miracle, he still had enough energy after today to make his way to the front of the prison he was caged in and stood face to face with Jack. His curiosity peaked enough that he wanted to know more.

“They were found dead an hour ago. Strung up like one of the cases you've worked on.” Jack stated, no doubt trying to gauge how Will is taking what he was hearing. Will knows that the man wanted Will to be more interested and want to become involved.

“Like a copy-cat murder? Which case?” Now Will was interested, despite how exhausted he felt Will pushed forward. But then, ever since he returned to the field up until his incarceration Will was accustomed to pushing through his exhaustion and warning signs that his health wasn't doing so well.

“The angel maker case.” Jack answered. Will could picture it in his mind perfectly, even through the jaded mess his mind seemed to be in lately. Will instantly jumped on it however and implied that it could belong to the copy-cat killer himself. The one Will blamed for being. Jack's face seemed to darken briefly before looking tired and in a slight case of disbelief. Like he couldn't believe that Will was still trying.

Will felt himself wilt inside as Jack bluntly informed him, “This isn't as good as your work.” It hurt. Will felt like Jack just opened the door and walked right in just to stab Will in the heart. But then, given the fact that ever since the start of this mess, Jack believed Will to be guilty. Everyone did.

“I didn't kill those people Jack.” Will said, his words were quiet, and it took everything to remain upright in front of Jack. It looked like Jack just realized what he said and was about to try to soften what he had just said when his phone rang. Will didn't wait there for him to get off the phone. Instead, he just went back to his corner and stared upward at the roof. Why did Will bother? Why should he bother? Jack didn't even want to try to consider Will's innocence.

It was this exact moment that seemed to drive the point home at how alone Will is in this. There was only Will who was left dealing with his situation or not dealing with it. And Will knows, that if he wanted to be saved he would have to do it himself. Will had to make a decision of what his life was worth when standing up to the lure of stealing away the chance of murdering him via the law and by doing so, winning in his way. Not that it would have mattered, Will wouldn't have been there to watch as everyone else had to live with what they had done. Will had to decide which was more important to him.

And it was hard for him to do in this place with what he's been through and done to himself. It left everything looking bleak and gray, reflecting what he sees when he goes inward. When he risks going inward, it was never a comfort to see his once safe place tarnished and ruined. And for that, Will blamed himself and Hannibal Lecter. And this made it almost laughable and ironic. That the only person who appeared to be at least pretending to be there, is the one who betrayed Will in the first place. His betrayer and not to be forgotten, his ghost. Will didn't know what to make of it. If any sense could be found in any of this mess. He would need to confront Hannibal about this, about all of it. But he would have to do it when it was more likely and possible that the man would be more willing to be forthcoming with answers rather than playing a part for the surveillance.

There was also a curiosity in why Matthew killed those people, and it had to have been Matthew because he was the only person that fit the evidence. Matthew was the only one he spoke to after his initial beating and the only one who knew about Will's situation. Some part of Matthew seemed disappointed that Will wasn't the person who everyone thought he was.

Who Matthew thought Will was. But perhaps that disappointment might have been superficial. If that was the case, then what would he want from Will?

It was funny; Will seemed to be finding reasons not to go with trying to steal everyone's chance at murdering him legally. It was still an option, and Will knows that part of him would be able to do it. He's already tried once after all.

“Maybe you don't actually want to die?” There was sarcasm in Abigail's voice, there because they both knew that Will's already considering that notion and he would have had a response for her if it wasn't for the fact that they weren't alone. Not alone enough that was.

Cursing pulled Will's attention from his thoughts and the ceiling to Jack who hung up angrily. The man seemed like he just aged ten years right then and there.

“Listen, Will. I have to go; Dr. Lecter has just been attacked in his own home.” Jack stated before storming off leaving Dr. Chilton behind who didn't waste time in trying to catch up with him. Not that Will can confirm this as he didn't bother moving from his spot. Instead, he watched as Abigail pushed herself against the door and watched in Will's place. Not telling Will what was going on. Instead, she sprouted out her theories and questions. Abigail always seemed to be the inquisitive type underneath everything else.

In the hours after Jack's visit Will had time to sit and think. Think over today's court and how it went, or how badly it went for Will. Think about Jack's brief conversation and questioning, the accusation and blame there. It left Will feeling bitter and angry, a delayed reaction but no less important or relevant. It made things difficult as he did everything not to pace his prison like a caged animal. The only thing that seemed to pull Will from this mood was the sound of footsteps coming his way again. Moving to the front of his cell Will saw that it was Jack.

“Jack.” Will greeted as he watched Jack come to a stop in front of him. A part of him didn't want to acknowledge the man's presence, but curiosity got the best of him. Will didn't have to wait long for his curiosity to be satisfied as Jack started to explain the situation to Will. Inform him that one Matthew Brown was found in Hannibal's house, more accurately the kitchen where the initial fight started and ended.

“Is he alive?” Will asked, his question could be in regards to either Matthew or Hannibal. Who won the fight? What happened and how it happened?

“Dr. Lecter is alive, bruised and going to be sore. Matthew Brown, on the other hand, wasn't so lucky.” Jack answered, and Will wanted to be surprised, but he wasn't. Matthew attacked someone in their house where they know the layout intimately and more to the fact Matthew attacked someone who was well versed in killing and overpowering others. Will enquired why the attack happened in the first place, or if Hannibal knew why? Apparently, he didn't and was confused as to why he was attacked, but Will knows that's an act. It had to be.

“There's more,” Jack said, it seemed like he was trying to find the right words, Will frowned because the hesitance just to say it didn't fit Jack. Will had to be the one to push, to try to pry what Jack was trying to find words to say. It was a slightly strange sensation given how many times it felt like it was the other way and more than likely it was.

“Abigail Hobbs is alive.”

Chapter End Notes

How do you think Will is going to respond to this? And what do you think is going to happen now that her return was orchestrated to come some time sooner than it was originally planned. She's no longer the “surprise” Hannibal was saving for Will (only to be killed for real).

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will could only bring himself to stand there in shock while staring at Jack in disbelief; he wasn't even sure he heard correctly or if this was an imagined situation at the result of either his imagination or the medication he was forced to take. Sometimes physically forced, it depended on Will's state of mind or the what the mood was like for the orderlies. However, as the clock down the hall ticked on Will knew that this was real. That he had heard correctly. His ability to form words to respond to the man at that very moment became nonexistent as he tried to put his thoughts together past the screaming news in his head. His heart started to pound so hard that Will could imagine it being noticeable.

Will didn't know what to think. What to do. Or even how he was supposed to respond to what he just heard and what he just found out. The implications of this news was slower to come to Will, as he was trying to absorb the news.

Behind him there was movement. His nightmarish stag and his ghost of a girl everyone until recently thought he murdered. To his front, there was Jack who seemed like he needed Will to say something. To give him a direction he can go with this conversation, only Will was still not sure about what to say or think or even do.

But that wouldn't do; Will had to say something. Get things going and perhaps break free of the sudden numbness that seemed to be spreading throughout his body. Leaving him cold and directionless.

Words! Will needed to use words, to say something!

“W-what?” Was the only response that Will was able to give Jack. Will did wish he could find a proper thing to say beyond just one stuttered word, but he couldn't. Thankfully Jack seemed to think that this was enough because it was all it took for the man to carry on.

Will found himself informed of the confrontation that took place at Hannibal's place, though Will was a bit skeptical of this because it was obviously a story told through the winner's perspective. Will didn't say a word on that, though, experience told him to remain silent and just listen. So that's what he did. Will was informed more on the events of the confrontation and how Matthew Brown died as a result of a broken neck and that Hannibal was hospitalized as a precaution despite only acquiring nothing serious in injury wise.

Will found that he didn't k now what to even think about this or how to feel in regards to it. It was something he would have to think about more, later after Jack left. Right now, what Will did want to know was how Abigail was in the house and how she was alive. Will found it to be helpful to be numb, he could focus on being concerned over her. Though if Will was honest with himself, he didn't know how long that concern will last. When it will turn into anger or if it will turn into any other emotion beyond that.

“It turns out, Abigail managed to escape her captor and fled to the first place she could think of, which was Dr. Lecter's house.” Jack explained and in those words Will can tell that Jack didn't know what to think about the situation either. Even going so far as muttering that someone somewhere was pulling the wool over his eyes and everyone was blinded by someone. Will wanted to point out who it was, but experience told him that it would be ineffective, so he remained silent.

“How is she? Her state of mind, does she know who held her captive?” The word captive felt wrong in his mouth, all of it felt wrong, and perhaps that was because whatever numbness that kept him in check was starting to fade away. To his left, there was a concerned look on his ghosts face. Abigail was concerned and that only set Will on edge even further. Anger seemed to be the emotion that was creeping up as the numbness faded away. That anger left Will feeling a sudden strong need to lash out at something both verbally and physically. Whether that something would be himself, his ghost or Jack has yet to be discovered. After all the three of them were the only ones in the immediate area.

“Traumatized, to put it mildly, physically she's fine despite the missing ear. As for how she escaped, I don't know. But I want to question her further, though Dr. Bloom has insisted on being present.” Jack explained deliberately failed to inform Will of anything serious because of where Will was and what his charges are. Will couldn't be trusted it seemed and that hurt worse than he expected considering everything he has been faced with up until now. Will shook his head and tried to get past that part, who would have thought that he still could be hurt after what everyone has done to him and what role everyone played.

Will couldn't linger on that, so he forced himself to focus on the here and now. Try to get what he could out of Jack.

“Was she part of this?” They both knew what meant by that question, though Will didn't give Jack enough time to get a word in as he continued, “I need to know if she was a part of this Jack! I *need* to know! It was her *ear* and her supposed *death* that put me here!” Will didn't realize he was yelling until he saw movement to either side of Jack. Orderlies. Will had to force himself to back away from the glass. When did he get so close? It took a total of five deep breaths to calm himself down before he circled back and faced Jack again.

Jack looked old at that moment. Will didn't care, he just stared and wanted an answer.

“Not only her apparent death Will, but this gives us ground to reconsider your other charges. Since you didn't kill Abigail Hobbs, then perhaps you were right.” Jack sounded as tired as he looked old, and Will couldn't tell if Jack believed his words at the moment or if he was just saying what he did to appease Will. And that not knowing was stressful to Will who is used to being able to figure people out for the most part. Partly he blamed the medication they kept him on in here. It made things dulled down, and his focus dimmed, the funny thing was that he might have enjoyed it any other time. A chance to be normal, but right now it was killing him.

“I *am* right.” Will knew he just sounded desperate. That same desperation that had him trying to make people see his innocence, was the same desperation that had him trying to steal his victory back with his blood, was right there, front and center again. Will should be concerned

because it could go either way so easily again. All he could do was silently implore Jack to see things clearly for once.

But all Jack did was shake his head slightly, making a comment about being too old for this before saying his farewells to Will and leaving him alone in his cage with his ghosts. His memories and his realizations that even now with some truth coming out. Will was still alone in this.

It wasn't fair! Why did it have to be him to be put through this!

“Will?” His ghost, Abigail's voice was soft and concerned. Will smiled bitterly to himself while leaning his forehead against the glass window that showed his misery to everyone crossing his cage. Show his shame and his state as an animal in a zoo. Placing his palms flat against the glass Will focused on pushing himself inward. He needed to be elsewhere, temporarily free from his cage.

In his mind, where he was standing on his rivers shore was the only place he could go outside of his cage. So it was here he found himself. Abigail stood to his left still, concern written on her young face. Her young and lying face. His stag stood to his back and seemed the most curious on what was happening and what can happen from here on. Will didn't care. He just turned his focus on Abigail and only on Abigail.

“Did you know?” Will asked her, and it is a fair question and one that she answered no to. Always no when he repeated himself. Of course, it would be no, why would she tell him the truth. Will wasn't worth the truth it seemed, nor was he worth the trust he deserved and had a right to be treated decently.

“Where you working with him!” Did she give him permission to take a part of her to assist in framing Will. Her ear. Her blood. Her life! Her answer's to those questions were no as well. Perhaps because that was what Will wanted to hear, this ghost was not the real Abigail so she wouldn't know what the real Abigail knew, to her she didn't betray Will and didn't frame him. And Will knows this logically, and he knows that he shouldn't blame her.

But he did.

And because he did, Will found himself lashing out at her, taking her forcefully and pulling her with him into the river that was there again as she struggled and pleaded. Screamed for help. It didn't stop Will, and it didn't make him falter or hesitate as he pushed her down into the water and held her there. She scratched at his arms and tried to scream as water filled her mouth and her lungs as she thrashed below him. Will could feel her struggle against him. But he didn't stop until the movements stopped and he could only stare at her lifeless form as the stag breathed down his back.

He felt sick.

He felt powerful.

All the while being surrounded by his refilled river and a dead forest.

Fear and exhilaration chased him out of his head as he recoiled at what he has done while making his way to the back corner of his cage, his arms were scratched up, and his nails bloodied. Will was shocked no one stopped him and he wondered just how much of his imagined situation was played out? It was only him and the stag now; he must have chased Abigail or at least the imagined version of her away. Essentially murdering her. Will found himself staring up at the stag, into its blood red eyes and wondering what could he do now. What was there to do?

Will didn't know what to feel. Or settle on a feeling, after all, he did have a lot of emotion going on at the moment. A lot of things running through his mind, so much in fact that Will didn't hear the struggle going on down the hall. What he did hear was the sound of something heavy being dropped. Will forced himself to his feet and towards the front of his cage as an orderly ran by. It was serious, whatever it was.

Something about the situation told Will that it was a changing point, but he paid it little mind as he tried to spend the rest of the night sleeping. Only the stag was at his side now, and Will didn't know what to think about that. There was a lot he apparently didn't know what to think about, and at the moment as he gave into a restless sleep it was okay. It had no choice but to be okay.

In the coming days, Will found his trial put on hold as new evidence came to light and his case being investigated again. Evidence re-looked at and Abigail's interrogations, and interviews to be taken into account. Jack barely visited Will during this time, and Beverly only when there was evidence that needed to be figured out from a new angle. Those were always excuses to come, and Beverly spent half the time talking to Will about his dogs and trying her best to be supportive. It was the same old Beverly otherwise, and in this place, she was a breath of fresh air. Will was glad that he didn't try to convince her into investigating his case from the start. He feared what would have happened to her if he did.

That was perhaps a small bit of comfort, and Will took it. Because in BSHCI there was hardly any to be found. Even less in his mind.

It was through Beverly that Will learned about Abel Gideon going missing after being hospitalized for a broken back. It took Will back to the night where he heard a commotion and watched as an orderly ran by his cage. There were no signs of him anywhere or who could have taken him without being caught by the orderlies or officers assigned to help keep watch while he was in the hospital. But Will knew, everything in this situation pointed to Hannibal, and it was only Will who could see the connection. Everyone else was too blind and focused everywhere but where they need to be.

And when Will tried to tell them, show them. He was ignored. Which was why he was still here and why he now has a healing wound on his wrist and forced to take medication that dulls some things for him and trapped inside a cushioned cage that makes it so he has to rely on others for the necessities. Food. Bathroom visits. Shower rights. So Will remained silent on that, bid farewell to Beverly as she left and found himself being escorted to the visitor lounge instead of his cage as he expected to be.

When he asked, he wasn't answered.

Instead, his blood ran cold as he saw Hannibal standing with Abigail. She looked good, tired but good. Her hair covered her missing ear, and Will found himself halting in his step and if it wasn't for the orderly forcing him forward that's where he would have stayed. Or the point he would have turned and fled or lashed out. Hannibal had a painted look of concern on his face, as he always did. Abigail seemed more torn on what she should feel or react. Will did notice how she looked him up and down before looking away slightly. Guilt? Shame? Not that it mattered as anger flared up in Will.

What was he to say? How was he to say it? Should he tell Abigail that he imagined drowning her in a river? Should he tell them both to leave and never come back. Wish them a happy life together?

Will settled for saying nothing waited on them to take the lead here.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry I'm late, I've had a busy week and barely had time to focus on this story.
Hopefully as I had a taste of my new schedule in activities I'll be able to find proper time to focus on this story.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As Will was made to sit there, faced with them he was forced to go through a lot of emotions. All the while shutting down any conversation that Hannibal attempted, he didn't trust himself to speak with them. Will could barely even stand looking at them for different reasons. The most obvious reasons were for Hannibal and what he has done to Will and clearly to Abigail as well. The sheer thought of what Hannibal drove him to and what was done to him was enough to have a headache bloom in his head throbbing in time with his wrist.

For Abigail on the other hand, though anger was the main one still and distrust was still a close second. There was guilt as well. Guilt for a reason she should never know, it would be a horrendous conversation should he confess that he imagined murdering her in a river. Drowning her. Nonexistent scratches where she clawed at his arms stung still. Though only Will would be able to see them. Only Will knows of their existence.

“Will -” Abigail finally spoke up, and Will reminded himself that this wasn't his ghost. His ghost never sounded uncertain with him, and his ghost always had a spark of life and a sharp wit to her. Dry humor and cutting barbs that most would mistake form something else entirely if they didn't know how to read between the lines. Like Will did.

Will didn't know what to think or how to react at the flinch he gained from her when he turned his full attention to her. Knowledge of what she's done and what she knows Will knew about her no doubt still fresh in her mind after all this time of playing dead. Under orders or her decision was yet to be seen. Regardless though, whatever she was going to say seemed to die in her throat while she was buried under Will's attention. Will half expected to see hand prints on her slim throat and was both disappointed and thankfully relieved that they didn't exist.

Will saw out of the corner of his eye, a tilt in Hannibal's head as it became clear that both Will and Abigail were being studied. Watched carefully. Will wondered what conclusions and observations are being made by the doctor. Did Hannibal see what Will had done in his mind? Could he even figure that out? Did he get that far into Will's mind that he would be privy to that knowledge? A chill went down his spine at the thought. It was incredibly uncomfortable now as to when there was a time when that insight was becoming more and more attractive to Will.

“She had nothing to do -” Hannibal finally said after a few minutes of silence, most likely deciding that nothing was going to come in the form of a conversation between Will and Abigail. It was enough to draw Will's attention back to Hannibal and rage curl in his stomach even tighter than before. All conversation attempts before this were innocent queries and idle chit-chats. And now it wasn't, and it was enough to give the power of speech back to Will. At least for the moment while what he wants to say aligns with his emotions.

“Her ear was put down my throat, and I vomited it up into my kitchen sink. You going to tell me you held her down and cut off her ear as opposed to her giving it to you, so you can do this to me!” Will found himself snapping only to end in Will yelling at them. Not caring if he drew shifts from orderlies nearby. Not caring on whether or not he would be dealing with any repercussions later on. As it always is the case here. Consequences didn't matter at the moment because what he said in his anger, was something that needed to be said.

“I had nothing to do with this Will, I am s-” The tone was filled with sorrow and regret, but at the end of the day it was as false as the good man the doctor portrayed himself to be. It made Will sick that people bought into that act so desperately that they failed to see what was right in front of them.

“Bullshit.” Will interrupted, he knows why Hannibal is refuting what he's being accused of. There were recording devices hidden in this room as there is in most places in this building. So rather than simply dodging accusations he was upfront in denying them. Lying to Will's face as he did so. Will wondered if that was an act or if for once Hannibal proved to not be a perfectly constructed human. Not that it mattered at the moment. There was a slight narrowing of eyes, something that happens consciously or unconsciously when Hannibal was displeased with something said or done. Will wondered how many people missed the warning sign that they were putting themselves at risk?

Silence fell on the three of them, and it seemed to leave the youngest visibly uncomfortable as she tried to conceal the shifting and fidgeting. The silence carried on for a full ten minutes. Will tried to maintain eye contact with Hannibal, but in the end, it was Will who had to look away. Not out of fear or his own dislike of eye contact, but out of self-defense and trying to protect all the other muddled emotions he was dealing with. He didn't want Hannibal to see them, he didn't want the extra burden of that weight and examination from a thorough doctor who knew him too well as it was.

“I see we cannot get anywhere today, I really do wish you can see the truth of the matter Will. I am not your enemy and Abigail is not your victim. Nor does she want to be seen or remembered as such.” Hannibal finally said, voice calm with practiced skill and Abigail quietly confirmed her part of that statement with a reassuring smile. One that apparently wasn't taught to her by Hannibal. Will thinks that maybe just maybe, he might be able to get past Abigail's part of this whole mess if things went right from this point on in regards to her.

“Hard to think that way when I'm caged here under charges I didn't commit.” Will found himself saying before he could stop himself. A head tilt from Hannibal was the first response Will received for that statement. Did it give him idea's, of better settings to try to convince Will of Hannibal's version of truths and facts? Not that it mattered, Will was trapped here and even if he wasn't. He'd put a safe distance between himself and them. He hoped Abigail would escape Hannibal as well, carve out her life. Free of them both.

“I agree.” Hannibal stated calmly, and Will got the distinct feeling that there is something else there, a meaning underneath that statement. But it was all Will got as farewells were said, by Hannibal and Abigail instead of Will. He didn't grace them with a response. Only stared stubbornly forward as the orderlies came to fetch him and take him back to his cage.

And once back there, he only seemed to feel even more alone than before. And it was his fault just as it was theirs. Or his.

A bitter twist of his lips into a horrific impersonation of a smile was the only thing to indicate what he was going through at the moment. In the back of his mind, the bellowing of his nightmarish stag was all that he heard and Will wanted to ask it, how much longer does he have to live in this nightmare? He would have asked Abigail, but he murdered her, and she went and lived with Hannibal instead. And Will was left behind and alone, and it was his fault.

His and everyone else's.

Sleep didn't come easy that night, and instead he kept waking up wondering if he was going to get punished or if pale slim hands were going to pay a visit to his neck as his hands did hers. There was moments when he wondered if the hardness at his back was in fact a table for him to be laid out on. It was a bone-chilling sensation. By the time morning came, Will found himself curled up as much as he could be without it being a fetal position.

It was there that Jack and Doctor Chilton found him that morning. Will didn't pay much mind to what they were discussing. Instead, he fought to keep his eyes open as he moved to a seated position and waited on what they wanted. With his exhaustion, Will felt incredibly drained. It took longer than he would have liked to realize that Jack was calling his name. With unhidden irritation Will answered, forcing himself to his feet and towards the front of his cushioned cage.

“You look like shit.” Jack pointed out, not that it was needed. Will figured he probably did. He was in need of a haircut, sleep, and freedom away from this place and everyone else.

“You're not so hot yourself Jack.” Will responded, dry in his response. Will didn't bother to give any other answer, instead focused on the sound of amusement that seemed to break free from Jack for a moment before where they were, and their situation fell back on them like a weighted blanket. It was that incentive that had Jack explaining how things will transpire from here on out, something he was surprised that his lawyer wasn't here doing that.

“Your lawyer was found dead this morning. So I'm here to deliver the message.” Jack explained, and Will wondered which one of them it was who did the killing. Abigail or Hannibal. Or could it have been both of them, tag teaming the arrogant lawyer who cared very little about who he was representing? This time it was Will, but it wasn't hard to imagine others dealing with the same attitude and stance on matters.

“So the evidence collected, it's all getting re-examined. The trial is on hold. But -” Will essentially parroted back, only to find himself stopping near the end for a moment before forcing himself forward in his need to know, “- But what happens to me in the meantime?” He needs to know! It was important. Does he have to stay here or could he go home? He wants to go home, and now that it almost seems to be an option it was as great of a need as it was and is to end everything. Steal back his life and the choice of what to do with it. Live or die, thrive or wither.

“We can't simply release you into the public.” Doctor Chilton spoke, words almost carefully picked but hidden meanings and jabs were very present and understood. It was enough to get a sharp glance of disapproval from Jack. That look and unspoken siding with Will would have been cherished and received well seven months ago. Now Will was almost shocked at how little he felt in response to it. Instead just waited for them to go on. To see if they were here to dangle a tantalizing promise of freedom just outside of his reach to taunt him. Whether it would have been purposeful or not would be seen in due time should that be what this was.

“I can, however, move you into being under house arrest.” Jack explained, most likely considering this to be a better option and it was. He even seemed proud of this option in comparison to how things were at the moment. And Will couldn't blame him, the idea of house arrest was considerably better, and perhaps he would be able to get some rest finally. Proper rest without feeling too caged. Depending on how much roaming he was allowed to do he would be able to find things around his property to keep him busy. Boat motors, his barn. Maybe even build a boat? Or something, anything would be better than this suffocating existence that left him wanting a way out in any way possible.

Still, he had to be sure that this was what was being offered.

“I can go home?”

That question seemed to cause Jack to flinch, and it was only because of that did Will realize how small he must have sounded then. How fragile he must have looked to Jack and Will wanted to scream and cry out in anger at the unfairness of it. Instead, he just waited for the disappointing answer he was sure he was going to get.

It seemed to take a moment of courage gathering before Jack said two words that had Will wanting to crumble before them, “No Will.” Why couldn't he go home, to his home? See his dogs, touch and be with them. If they even remembered him.

“Then where would I go?” Will didn't even care that his emotions weren't hidden all that well and his bitterness and distress spread across his face. Where would he go! Why can't they just let him go home? He wanted to go home and now that it seemed that it was a possibility, it became a desperation that choked his insides cruelly.

“It hasn't been decided yet. I'm working on it.” Jack answered and eventually conversation shifted to things deemed almost safer. Like finding out that Miriam Lass was alive. Will didn't know what to do with that information. But found that caring about that was hard to do, he knows he should. It's a good thing that she was alive, missing an arm like Abigail was missing an ear. But all Will could do was half listen and cross his arms in an attempt to keep out that familiar cold chill.

Why was it always him who is given hope and having it stolen from him just as quickly?

He almost got to go home.

And then he couldn't. Instead, he would be in some other person's house. Caged there instead of here. Because of course, that's how it would be.

“Does she know, who had her caged?” Will asked, and the answer turned out to be no. But they haven't interviewed her yet. Instead, care was given to try to get her to resettle in living arrangements as well as doctors there to care for her physical needs and emotional traumas. Will can sympathize, but not enough at the moment. Instead, he refocused on the tease he received in the near hopes of going home. Questioning Jack on when he will find out, it turned out he didn't and it would take a week to get everything finalized, and paperwork filled out.

Of course it did.

Will tuned everyone out after that and didn't pay any mind to either of them until the left and Will felt tears trying to form.

He just wanted to go home.

And once more, found out he couldn't. To make matters worse, there was nothing sharp in this cage to fix things. To get ride of the hope he so foolishly let himself fall victim to for the first time since the whole mess started.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry it took so long. Question is, who do you think should house Will during his being under house arrest?

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It went without saying that the tense atmosphere was high, after learning that in a weeks time he would be released from this cage to be placed in another only increased the tension throughout the building. Tension from Doctor Chilton, his orderlies and in Will himself. All for different reasons. For Doctor Chilton, private life as well as the loss of his chance to delve as deep as he would have wanted in Will's mind. There was also the matter of Will's treatment, unorthodox and at times lack of consequences present for those handling Will including Doctor Chilton. It was only by careful planning and luck, that nothing would be able to stick to Doctor Chilton anyway. The orderlies were tense because of their direct treatment of Will, the punishments he gained every now and again. The mocking, the cruel stares and treating this place as a zoo and Will as an animal to show off to girlfriends and boyfriends. Needlessly said, no one wanted anything to get out in the open.

So Will remained as vigilant as he could despite the medication and past his exhaustion. No one did anything and were extra professional.

During that week when Will had a moment he tried to figure out who he would be staying with. There were a few possibilities. Some with credentials and others without. It was hard to say because there could be possibilities that someone would be chosen that Will didn't know and would be able to keep a detached view on matters. And Jack never hinted or told Will anything beyond it being worked on as they spoke. During the week, Will even got a visit from Alana for the first time in awhile. She seemed to be filled with guilt but just as much happiness at Will's apparent innocence. Innocence she never believed entirely before even when Will tried to get her to see it. Will didn't know if he could move past that, and it must have shown as she seemed to leave the visit disappointed.

Beverly still made her visits with updates on investigations even though she wasn't supposed to, but then Beverly was always kind with Will and at times bent the rules for Will. There was a part of him that wondered and foolishly hoped that if he was to be caged with someone, it would be her. The likelihood of that happening though was small, she wasn't next of kin and wasn't even that close of a friend outside of work.

Besides Beverly and the single visit from Alana, Will had a few regular visits from Hannibal, and he always came with Abigail in tow. Neither of them gave Will any idea of who he would be trapped with. The visits never last long due to the amount of bitterness and sharp-edged words Will directed at Hannibal. Will always wanted to ask them not to come again, but he never managed to get that far and now there wouldn't be a point considering the week is almost over.

When the day finally came, it was Doctor Chilton who came and fetched him from his cage with a change of clothing. Will didn't receive privacy to get dressed, but that didn't change the fact that he was happy to wear his clothing again. Few words said between them, and it

was once more apparent that Doctor Chilton didn't approve of his release. It was a minor victory that Will lets himself have.

As he followed the cane-wielding psychiatrist, Will felt his chest tighten, and his palms start to sweat. It was like all the tension he was forced to live with, everything he had to deal with or not deal with was coming up to the surface, and it felt like it took everything to not let it show.

By the time they got to the main entrance, Will had found that it was a relief to see that it was Jack who was picking him up and not anyone else.

“Jack.”

“Will.”

The greeting shared between them gave nothing away. But it was better than nothing, so Will took it as is and moved past it. Deciding to take his place at Jack's side with a foot between them for Will's sake and they both left the building. Jack has yet to tell Will who he would be forced to stay with. Could it be Jack himself? Jack was with the FBI and who better than someone who was in the FBI to keep an eye on someone while they were under house arrest?

Will found himself watching as BSHCI got smaller and smaller in the rearview mirror, only looking forward when he could no longer see it. He was finally away from that place! But why didn't he feel better? Even with his new cage being unknown to him, should he not be happier about being free from that place at least? It was frustrating, to say the least, but he swallowed it down and let it sit next to the scream he refused to release.

When the silence became uncomfortable, Will decided that there was no time like the present to start a much-needed conversation.

“Where am I going?” Will asked, at the moment he knows that the destination was the Behavioural Analysis Unit where Will worked up until he was framed and betrayed. Confirmation wasn't necessary but received as Jack explained that he was getting fitted for his ankle monitor at the BAU instead of his final location before a quick side stop at Will's house. An odd move to say the least, given the fact that it should be programmed and placed on him at the place where he was going to be forced to remain. It made Will question Jack on who or where he was staying and failed to get an answer, instead he was forced to exit the vehicle after it parked.

Ignoring Jack completely after that, Will stole a moment to stand in the sun. It didn't matter that it was cold out, or that there was snow on the ground. Will needed a moment to take in the fact that he was no longer under Doctor Chilton's watchful eye and in his old cage. In the back of his mind, there was a temptation to run. He wanted just to disappear and have everyone leave him alone for good. Everyone has cost him too much, and Will didn't even know how to get anything back.

Will didn't know how long he stood there almost tempted to smile at the feel of the sun and fresh air. His brief moment of freedom before an invisible chain is put on his ankle. Will wasn't prepared to give up his brief moment of freedom but found himself being forced to as

Jack called out to him. Tense and waiting, he expected Will to fight him or to run and it reminded Will that no one really had enough faith in him. To believe him. And with that thought in his mind, the day seemed to grow cloudy as he walked towards the building where he will have himself put in direct contact with everyone again and waiting to get fitted for his chain.

Alana was waiting for them, just inside of the doors. For a moment she looked like she wanted to hug Will. Her happiness to see him almost drove her forward. But there must have been something that tipped her off on how that would be a bad idea. Instead, they shared tense greetings and farewells before Will obediently followed after Jack, placing his hands in his pockets and trying to ignore the whispers and the stares as they moved down the hallway. They all believed him to be a murderer. Will could feel it as clearly as he felt the sun only moments before.

It hurt more than what Will would like to admit. Will wondered if there was a way to amputate that part of himself so he would stop hurting.

Beverly was the first member of the team to greet him. Touching his arm and back long enough to greet him but thankfully not enough to smother him. Her smile was wide, and the genuine feel to it had Will trying to give her one in return. It was probably too small to be spotted without looking, but Beverly seemed to have caught sight of it. It appeared to be enough for her, and Will was relieved.

Her sincerity was a breath of fresh air as she greeted him verbally while the rest of the team was polite. It was clear to Will that they were skeptical of Will's innocence and not happy with what's going on with the evidence. Will could understand, they were good at their jobs and to find out that there might have been a mistake on their watch was the worst thing to happen. He wondered if they would fully believe his innocence before this investigation was over.

After brief words had been exchanged with Beverly, Will followed Jack into his office where Will could sit down. He didn't realize how hard it was to suddenly be thrust back into the population after being isolated with only a few people to keep an eye on him and a few visitors. Will should have known. But there is nothing to do about that now even as he rubbed his eyes only to hear the sound of a cup being set on the desk in front of him.

“Coffee. Looks like you need it.” Jack said, and Will wondered where he managed to get it. Not asking questions, Will thanked him and took it into his hands relishing the warmth that radiated out into his hands. The smell was inviting and it was all the push he needed before he took a sip and despite the fact that it was just the stuff they had in the building, it was good. Will focused on the drink as best that he could while a few people came in and started to fit his ankle with the ankle monitor. It was black and ordinary looking and yet felt like it weighed a ton.

“I need to know who or where I'm going to be trapped.” Will was straight to the point, even bypassing general manners all because he couldn't wait any longer. And he couldn't, it was tormenting not knowing where or who or what was going to happen to him. Jack didn't answer him, instead made the decision to wait until everyone left the room so that it would be just the two of them. The conversation coming up had to take place in private. Will is grateful

for that, but it didn't lessen his need in the slightest. Instead it had him setting the cup down and focusing all of his attention on Jack. Almost pinning him in place, it was a first for Will. Will didn't have time to reflect on that, instead it was obvious that Will was finally getting what he wanted as Jack sat down.

“First of all, Port Haven was up offered up as an option. But given the fact that Abigail Hobbs has been placed back there under court orders and given your recent history and false charge. It would be best to not have you under the same roof as her despite her visitations under supervision of Doctor Lecter. Those are the only times she is allowed to leave and only because it was to BSHCI. She's allowed periods where she's allowed to leave the property so long as it's supervised, in case you wanted to know.” Jack started, Will was glad that it seemed like Port Haven won't be where he's going. Will didn't know if he could stand another hospital.

But it left a sense of dread because where else was offered up as an option?

“I tried myself to have you placed with me, fought for it even. The least I could do was house until we can take that thing off your ankle. But things were brought to my attention on why you can't live with me. My wife being one of them. And Doctor Bloom was happy to shove in my face my habits when it came to you and what you can do -” Jack let out a small sound that could almost be laughter if not for the seriousness of the situation before continuing on, “- and let's face it, we both know I would get you working. Still plan to, but not with you under my roof.” There was a seriousness in his words that had Will feeling that dread becoming solid. He could see where this conversation was headed in regards to who he would be trapped with. The reasons why are slightly beyond him, but by the end of this conversation Will figures he'll know what Jack wants of him and where Will was going.

Will could do or say nothing as he watched as Jack seemed to tense in preparation for the next part of this conversation. Ready to fight with Will if he had to, no doubt about that. Gripping his scarred wrist, Will waited while trying to brace himself.

“And given your attempt at suicide and being on suicide watch, you would need to be put with someone trained to deal with that.” Jack stated and Will found himself unable to look at Jack for a moment, wishing he didn't bring that up. To have that shoved into his face was far from welcomed and it stung something in him that could only be considered shame. It left a foul taste in the back of Will's throat. Whether it was intended like that or not didn't matter. Not at the moment and it probably never will. It is what it is and Will fought to refocus and put up some sort of defence to protect himself in this room.

“Okay. Which psychiatrist are you shoving me with, Jack?” Will found himself asking, his words were steadier than Will felt. There was only two options he could think of. Doctor Alana Bloom who was forced to have potential romantic feelings put on display during the trial. So it couldn't be her. She was compromised. The other option was Doctor Hannibal Lecter who went on record admitting that Will was his friend, and at one time they were friends. Or close enough to be friends. He in all purposes should be considered compromised for that as well, as well as the fact that he was Will's unofficial psychiatrist before Will's arrest.

But when has that stopped him?

“Alana suggested someone different, unattached from this whole mess. A Doctor Bedelia Du Maurier, however she isn't taking cases at the moment and Doctor Lecter pointed out why it would be best that you didn't go to her given her history with another patient that died under her care for your own well-being.” Jack explained, bringing up a potential option only to crush it in the same breath. Will wished that wasn't even brought up, what was the point other than to talk. To put off the unavoidable conclusion of this conversation. Will took a moment to collect his thoughts, to try to isolate and shove his dread to the side.

“Don't say who I think you're going to say.” Will tried because of course, it was going to be Hannibal. It had to be and why wouldn't it be, the man pulled every other string so far, and everyone dangled and went along with him willingly enough. And Will can say or do nothing to stop everyone from being sheep's being led to the slaughter.

The brief silence was all it took to confirm it. An explanation wasn't necessary but it was given all the same. Going so far as saying that Hannibal was going to drop his patients who weren't a danger to themselves. What Will did manage to pick up on was the underlining of suspicion and just like that Will knew what Jack wanted. Needed from Will. Jack wasn't putting Will to work, officially. There was a part of Will that wanted to plead with Jack for mercy, to not put him with Hannibal and not ask him to put himself at risk. After everything that has been done to Will, Will just wanted someone to be merciful.

But he couldn't utter a single word; it was like something reached inside of him and crushed his voice where it laid. All he could do was shake his head no.

“There's a surprise waiting for you at your house.” Jack said as he gave Will a moment to collect himself. The rest of the time at the FBI headquarters and the trip to Will's home was a nauseating blur. Will was glad that he didn't have anything to eat yet and refused Jack when he offered to stop at a fast food place for Will. He couldn't stomach anything at the moment. It was a relief to see his home again, but he knows that in a few hours he would be forced to leave it. There was a car there already, Alana's.

Blinking a few times, Will exited the car wondering why she was there. It wasn't until he heard perhaps the most welcoming sound coming from inside his house. Barking and noise of the door being pushed against. It was the only warning Will got as the door flew open and Will found himself going to his knees as furry bodies surrounded him. Licks to his face, whining and tail waging were the relieving signs that they knew him still. Loved him and was comfortable enough to demand belly rubs. They were slightly untrained, but all in all, they were good dogs.

One dog held back a bit; he didn't recognize her.

“Who're you?” Will asked, his voice reflecting the happiness he was allowed to have for the moment as he did what he could to fend off licks while focusing on the newcomer.

“Her name is Applesauce, she was a stray.” Alana's voice answered him as footsteps drew near. She seemed uncertain about him, but it didn't stop her from coming a bit closer. Will let the grievances between them slide for a moment to focus on something innocent between them. Her new dog, Will's dogs. Will listened as she explained what's been happening with the dogs while Will was away. How they were behaving and how Winston kept running

home. It made Will hold onto Winston a bit tighter then he meant, it made him thankful that the dog seemed to understand his need at that moment as he sat practically in Will's lap.

The ground was getting cold, but that didn't matter at the moment. Will just had to have them close. Be among them because that was the safest thing at the moment.

Will could finally breathe. Even if it was only for the moment.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, in the end it was Hannibal Lecter's house that was picked. The doctor all but dropping some patients to make room for his most important charge besides Abigail Hobbs.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

> Warning: In this chapter there is a panic attack, though I will warn you I never wrote about one in a story before and I have never experienced one myself. I had to look it up to try to write it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A total of six hours, that was how long he was able to have with his dogs. Only six small hours. Once it was finished, Will was forced to get back into Jack's vehicle and watch as his dogs were loaded up in Alana's vehicle for them to be taken back to her place. If Will was in any better of a mood he would almost admire how she was able to make that work. But Will wasn't. Instead, he sat there in his misery as he watched Jack stand with Alana for a moment talking. They looked towards Will a few times, and Will was forced to look away. Glare out of the window on his door.

In the treeline stood his nightmarish stag, waiting and staring at Will. And Will stared back, ignoring Jack as he climbed into the vehicle and starting the ignition.

“Alana said she'll talk with Hannibal to see if it's possible to find a way to bring your dogs o-” Jack said, Will knew it was an attempt to try to comfort Will or make him feel a bit better. A weak attempt, but it was Jack trying to be as nice as he could in a situation like this one.

“I highly doubt Dr. Lecter would have space for dogs. Everything is pristine and in its place. There's no room for dogs.” Will stated, perhaps more harshly than it was intended. A fact that Will didn't care about, he was, after all, being forced to live with the man who did this to him. All because of a falsified lack of other places to cage him and a ploy to have Will work to catch the lion while in the lion's den.

All of which, against Will's wishes. Perhaps he would put that in his will? Let it be known that he was being forced to live somewhere that could be harmful to his life and sanity, with a man who read letters written by Will before his first attempt at regaining control of his life by his death. Thus leaving him even more vulnerable than before.

“Either way, she said she'd talk to Hannibal.” Jack stated, and Will wondered when she would have time to speak to Hannibal? Between visits with patients at his office? She wouldn't be able to have much private time with him at the doctor's house because Will would be forced to live there. Something that caused Will to shift and get uneasy the closer they got. He wasn't sure how it work out. Will hasn't lived with anyone since his college days. And that was him living in a dorm room.

Opting to say nothing, Will just stared out the window and watched as houses grew bigger and fancier. All of which seemed to be mocking and closing in on Will. It was enough to force him to look at the dash until he felt the vehicle turn to pull in somewhere. And just like that, Will was there.

There were men in the yard hooking up sensors that would ensure that Will couldn't leave the property without someone being aware and Will felt his heart speed up.

“You okay?” A distant voice asked. But making sense of it wasn't an option as Will found it hard to breathe while the world seemed to start spinning out of control. Why him! Why was he here? Did the world hate him enough to have him placed here!

“Will!” The same voice. Will ignored it. Scrunching up his eyes Will tried to ignore everything and will the world to stop spinning on him, but it was hard because everything kept coming and crushing him. His heart kept it's fast pounding pace and Will felt like he would start shivering soon.

That distant voice was met by another voice, one that knew what this was.

“... panic attack....” If that voice said anything else, Will didn't hear it over his own heart.

“... help... house... Jack.” The other voice said, it sounded reluctant and disapproving, and Will wanted to shrivel up and disappear. But he couldn't because he felt hands and felt himself being pulled and pushed and his legs felt like fluid underneath him. But somehow with the help of those hands, Will found himself somewhere else. A hard surface beneath him and against his back. The other voice was the only voice present now.

“... not... first... no choice...” The other voice spoke to him, explaining something. But Will was having a hard time making sense of it; his eyes closed still. One hand was now covering his own eyes while the other felt the smooth hard surface beneath him.

Why him?!

“... Will?” The other voice asked, but Will shook his head no. He couldn't do it, couldn't open his eyes, and he couldn't face what was in front of him right now. Not now, if ever. That voice kept asking for his attention, calm and calculating. But Will tightened his grip on his face and kept his eyes squeezed shut. No, no past the pounding of his heart he couldn't do anything more than sit and feel the world spin.

He wanted to go home, but he couldn't open his eyes to find his home.

He was trapped and stolen away from home. Swept up in something he has no control over. If he ever did.

The feeling of a heavy exhale of breath against his ear and the touch of the nuzzle from an all too familiar animal only he could see. And with that, a large gulp of air made it past his mouth. Some air returned to his lungs. But it didn't stop the heart and didn't give him the strength to take his hand away from his eyes to look. Instead the sound of hooves clicking accompanied his pounding heart.

There was a hand on his wrist making Will remember why his wrist was sore in the first place and that chill he was forced with seemed to tighten its grip. The hand on his wrist pulled gently until Will was forced to follow that movement with his hand. Letting it be placed on the ground to mirror his other hand. Thanks was given but not acknowledged. Instead, Will felt hands on each side of his face and that same voice calm and quiet now spoke to him.

Asking things of him.

“... open your eyes?”

“... breath in deeply?”

Another thanks was given before more was asked of him.

“... breath out.” In and out, in and out. Will didn't know why he complied, but he did. Those hands didn't move from his face, and Will wasn't sure he wanted them to stay or to go. They were a focus point, but Will didn't know if that was good because the last anchor he had. His paddle was the cause of him being swept up in a current of falsified evidence and illness.

“I need you to open your eyes, Will. Can you do that for me?” That voice, the voice he now puts the name Hannibal to spoke. Voice still calm, and Will hated him for it. But whether he had the energy to do anything with that hatred, was a question for another day. Instead, Will wordlessly answered no to that. He couldn't open his eyes, not right now. Not with the world still spinning and the chill that seemed to press into him through clothing and skin. Right to his bones and past that point. His voiceless answer was acknowledged, and Will found himself sitting next to what could be considered an inferno placed right next to him. His hand and sore wrist was taken into a loose grip.

“Just keep breathing, a deep inhale and a steady exhale.” It was all that was asked of him. And Will was struck by the caring nature of it, but Will hoped and silently vowed to not be taken as a fool to fall for it again. Though he knows that it's within the man's capabilities, a cruel undertone can easily be slipped in with that kindness and that only made things worse and can continue to make things horrible for Will.

Still, it was nice to steal a second and pretend that there was no undertones or motives behind it.

~ Brief One-Time POV change ~

Jack was shaken, this was not something he expected when he first set this plan into motion. Will was aware of the purpose of him being placed there instead of an institution or his home with a caretaker living with him. Not for the first time, Jack found himself having second thoughts. But he couldn't go back now! If Will's suspicions were right, and Jack suspected that they were. They needed evidence to catch the Chesapeake Ripper.

Taking out his phone, Jack called his wife.

“It's bad, Bella. He had a massive panic attack, I had to help Dr. Lecter get him into the house... I... I never seen that before, in all my years on this job. It's bad.” But it had to be

done. That's what Jack kept telling himself. It had to be done. To save lives. It was to save lives.

A small voice in the back of his mind asked:

What about Will's life?

It was a treacherous question, and Jack knows a fair one. It was in part because of Jack that Will was in a situation where this happened, and it was because of Jack that Will was pushed too hard and too far previously. And this seemed to be the outcome of that, the suicide attempt as well.

Could he continue this way? Knowing the possible risks?

The horrible thing was, yes he could. It was to save lives, many lives of possible victims and victims who have already met with death and buried. The ones they knew about. The many outweigh the few, and Jack wondered if he could live with that. In the end, would he be able to retire or die satisfied with everything he's done and accomplished?

That was an answer he didn't have yet.

A text was found on his phone the second he hung up with his wife.

“Will is calming down, I'll handle things from here.” It was a dismissal and a polite request for him to leave the property. After a few minutes of deliberation, Jack left Will's bag by the front door and did just that promising himself that Will is going to be okay. Everything will turn out for the best. He had to believe that, and Jack will spend the rest of his career after the Chesapeake Ripper is put away to care and rebuild Will properly.

Chapter End Notes

> Forgive me if the chapter is shorter than other chapters. It didn't feel right to go much longer than this for what happened in this chapter, the next one will delve deeper into Will's stay at Hannibal and the starting point of that. I hope I didn't write the panic attack too horribly because thankfully I never had a panic attack before so I don't know, from what I've read in symptoms alone it's a horrible thing to experience and I really don't like the idea of people facing that kind of fear... I hope that everyone who does will be free of it one day.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Warning: Suicide attempt (though not viewed as such by character)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hours could have passed, minutes or even seconds. In the end, it mattered very little, and Will didn't have much energy to care about time at the moment. But he did know he would have to move regardless; physical needs were making themselves known to him and the little fact that he didn't want to lose what little dignity he had left on the floor while sitting next to Hannibal Lecter. Trying to steady himself and brace against the realities, Will forced himself to open his eyes. The light felt too bright now, but Will stubbornly ignored that and blinked it away.

It was now that he realized that a thumb was rubbing circles into his hand and there was a palm right against the spot where Will had cut. For a brief moment, it almost looked like his wrist was being held in a manner that would slow or stop the bleeding. Or it could be to reassure oneself. But this was Hannibal and that behavior could very well be staged and falsified. It was enough that Will pulled his hand away and squashed the idle realization that his hand and wrist now felt cold.

There was a sudden realization that Jack was no longer here, it was enough to force Will to fight down down the urge to lose control again, something he didn't want to go through that again. What he went through did nothing but rub his face in the fact that he felt so powerless and he was vulnerable like an open wound bared to the elements. And this was something that Will hated and before and now resents further and given that he already had to go through it once as it was was bad enough. To make matters much worse, it was in the presence of both Hannibal and Jack.

Shame spread through him at that knowledge, and it was enough to make Will feel nauseous, and there was a brief moment of gratitude for an empty stomach.

“Will?”

Will shook his head, he couldn't bring himself to talk, and thankfully Hannibal didn't make him talk. It let Will take another moment to try to compose himself. Something that took longer than what Will would have liked. It was barely registered that Hannibal had left his presence long enough to fetch his bag. Another sign that this was real, that he was trapped here. A sharp sound caught in his throat and Will wondered which would come out first, that or the scream that was present since this whole mess started. Will wondered how much enjoyment the good doctor would get out of either reaction should they slip from his throat and come forth.

It was a horrible thought with a horrible truth buried in it.

Will startled when he found his fidgeting hands caught, drawing his attention to the fact that Hannibal was crouched in front of him. Giving Will a thorough look over from the looks of it before that focus shifted to the red line traveling across his wrist for a good few minutes before singling in on Will's face.

“Do you feel up to moving?” A simple question, but a sincere one. That was possible with this man, and Will knows this to be true. So Will gifted that with an honest answer of his own. A nod, he was able to do that though his body protested with its aches and with the fatigue that made Will wonder how he was able to get up with everything weighing him down.

It was now that Will truly realized that it was only himself and Hannibal.

“Where's Jack?” Will wanted to know; only his voice sounded so far away, and Will wondered why that was while he listened to the explanation he gained from Hannibal. Home, Jack went home. It was somewhere Will couldn't go. Instead, he was trapped here against his will and his wishes. It left a bitter taste in Will's mouth. That bitter sound may be the one to break free.

And in the end, it did. Will words dripped with it as he said, “Of course he did.” Perhaps that was a sign that he is too exhausted in far too many ways to control his emotions and which ones were heard or seen. Part of that was tied into his own Empathy, and it was part of the reason why people were exhausting to him, and most of the time he would rather have the company of a dog over a person. Not that any of that mattered at the moment. Instead, Will found himself moving through the rest of the night with an air of detachment and when that slipped Will wanted to shrink and disappear.

By the time Will made it to bed, he had found himself thinking of possibilities of whether it was possible or is possible to have another life that will be kinder to him. What would have happened if he had made another choice, to go left instead of right back when he just started out in trying to become an FBI agent. To go right would have led him wrong and to go left led him to where he was put through tests and denied. The route that led him to become a teacher and in turn someone who assists Jack and the others. Would he have had such a life as this if he had gone right?

Would he have been hurt so badly, betrayed so boldly and left so willingly?

It was these thoughts that chased him into his sleep.

In the week that followed the start of his stay at Hannibal Lecter's house, Will had to put up with a small steady stream of guests coming and going. The guests included Jack and his wife, Alana and sometimes with her was Abigail. They never stayed for long and even if they did Will put space between himself and everyone else. Sometimes escaping to his assigned bedroom to read or just try to get his mind back under control or to stop himself from feeling some of the emotions he was forced to have that were all his own.

Hopelessness, sorrow, betrayal and the latest emotion to take hold stronger than it had previously. Anger. The last one came when Will had to deal with either Jack or Hannibal too soon during his escapee episodes where his bedroom has become a sanctuary.

It was Alana who Will snapped at finally. It was her he sent away in tears, and it was because of that he had to find himself seated down at the table like a child with Hannibal and Alana. Will tried his best to keep himself in check after that, if only to escape the embarrassment and the fresh wave of shame and hopelessness that came with it. The near comical thing about the situation was that it wasn't set up to make him feel the way he did, they both were trying to help him get to the root of the issues.

Which was simple. All one had to do was look at Will's situation and see what the problem was.

Nothing could be done about it. So life went on. Will woke up in the mornings and by some miracle pulled himself out of his bed, he's taken up his old habit when he was a child, and that was getting lost in books. The first friends he could remember positively. Will started finding books that typically didn't suit the tastes of his current jailor and Will hated how just three books were enough to make him curious as to what he would find next. They always came every second to third day. But stopping wasn't an option now because then that would leave him with nothing but his jailor. So books it was.

As much as Will hated it, a routine was set. And it was unfairly easy to get into and embarrassing in how much Will preferred it at the moment. He hated how it gave him some reassurance in what to expect and how much he felt nearly afraid at what will happen when that routine is abandoned for a plot or some scheme that Will would have to pay for in some manner that scars him in some hidden or physical way.

By the end of the second week of his time spent at Hannibal's house, Will finds out that Hannibal would have to go back to work because he still has some patients that require his attention in person rather than being dealt with by phone. Before that happens, of course, Will finds out a small dinner is planned. One that involved only four people, himself and his current jailor. Alana and Abigail. Will wasn't entirely pleased with the prospect of such an event and spent time in the kitchen with Hannibal preparing for that dinner in hopes that there would be a phone call to cancel.

A phone call that never came and instead Will greeted them at the door while Hannibal finished setting everything up. They were early, and Will could tell that it irked the man rushing through the final touches of placement but not the meals itself, it was unseemly to rush through such an event.

With a deep breath, Will opened the door, and it was evident that neither of them expected it to be Will who answered the door. There was a tense moment between the three of them before it was broken by Abigail who first spoke with a simple greeting. Will followed her eyes to Will's wrist, it was enough for Will to pull on the sleeve in attempts to cover the red mark across his wrist. It left him feeling nauseous and angered.

“You're early.” Will spoke, the irritation he was dealing with made his words come out in a very unwelcoming tone. Something he wasn't sorry for in the least, instead he stepped aside

and let them in listening to Alana's reason for being early coming down to a fear of being late. It was a lie of course; perhaps Alana was hoping to be able to get a brief moment alone with Hannibal before dinner started? Abigail seemed like she wanted to speak with Will though she had little idea of how to start or what to do to accomplish it. Will found himself missing his ghost. She wouldn't have the same fear of speaking up. But she couldn't be here; Will murdered her, and now he was stuck with the real thing instead. It left a bitter taste in his mouth that Will didn't know what to do with, so he dubbed it as a sick joke.

“Dr. Lecter's in the kitchen. Or dinning room.” Will said as he walked with them.

“I figured as much, I'll talk to him in a bit. How are you?” Alana's words were professional to some degree, a self-defence. Abigail had lingered for a moment before she caught on that Alana didn't want her present. Will gave them a moment by stopping where he stood and watching as Alana stopped with him, a few steps between them. Will wondered if it was because of guilt or because of Will himself?

“I got released from one prison and placed in another. How do you think I am?” Will's response was harsh with the bitterness he felt, he knows it but it was all that Will could give her right now and all that he could manage to let out without losing control of himself and the emotions he's been living with since he got here. Of course, that immediately got a response from her, an attempt to placate him and reassure him. Something that didn't last long before Will made the decision of what they were going to do at this point by moving forward to find Abigail helping at the dinner table while talking quietly with Hannibal. The near ease they had made Will long for his ghost and long for that same ease with the real thing.

Will wasn't sure how things were supposed to go, so he waited on Hannibal who had them seated almost immediately. No one sat at the head of the table. This dinner was set up to be informal despite the layout and meals planned. Nothing extremely complicated and tonight no one had anything alcoholic, and Will figures that's because of him. According to Hannibal, Will wasn't ready for anything alcoholic as they had things that needed to be worked out in regards to his emotional well-being. Will, of course, disagreed with that reason and kindly informed Hannibal of it. Needlessly said, it was a tense afternoon for Will.

Idle conversations were attempted despite how tense the air was around them. They were all walking on eggshells it seemed. Everyone except for Hannibal who was watching the entire situation with a keen interest. Alana attempted to steer away from any conversation that involved the FBI, so most were about books that she heard Will was reading or the weather and Will's dogs. Will almost perked up during that part of the conversation. It hurt to hear that Winston kept running away and going home, Will can sympathize because that's what he wants to do.

“Give them an extra pat for me.” Will said as his insides clenched hard with the sheer want of needing to see his dogs. His pack.

“Perhaps if the weather is fine tomorrow, your dogs could be brought to my backyard for a few hours.” Hannibal suggested, it was a shock, and Will didn't realize his attention snapped to the man next to him. A hopeful surge curled in Will despite how hard he tried to push it down. Hannibal making that suggestion was a play on power. It couldn't be out of kindness

for Will. Despite telling himself that, Will couldn't stop himself from hoping that he could touch them again, have them with him even if it was only for a few hours.

He gave a nod and Alana immediately agreed on that being a good idea and went about thanking Hannibal and congratulating him on a good idea. All Will could do was stare and try to figure out the underline ploy to this while nodding. Will knows he's going to feel foolish later, for letting himself get caught up in this. But after what he's been through, no one can blame him for wanting to hope to have his dogs with him again. Even if it was only for a moment.

Abigail managed to get Will into a conversation that was safe, his dogs. It didn't last long, but it was something?

The only ones talking after that were Alana and Hannibal, Abigail and Will focused mostly on eating and listening. Somehow the conversation delved into Freddie's latest article and branched off to a current murder that was close to Will. Alana immediately tried to veer away from it, but Will's interest was peaked because how would the death of someone be linked to him when he was here. With a significant amount of reluctance, Alana caved.

“It was the judge from your trial. Judge Davies.” Alana informed him, Will lost all appetite. He remembered how that judge seemed to look down on him. Judge him and treated the entire situation without any mercy as far as Will was able to perceive. Will can remember that very clearly and for a second he was back in the courtroom listening to professional posturing and striking down defences attempted on his behalf.

“Will?” Alana's voice or was it Abigail? Ignoring that for a moment, Will took a look at everyone at the table noting concern and wariness on both Alana and Abigail's faces. It was Hannibal who stood apart despite the concern that played across his face as he watched Will. There was satisfaction, pleasure, and accomplishment. And reality struck Will again that turned the food he swallowed to ash and his plate of half-eaten food became infested with rot and maggots. Will knows what he saw without a moment's doubt, who Hannibal Lecter was and he knows that what he saw would be useful to Jack.

It was to this that had Will wonder if the contents of his stomach would come up here or if he would have time to flee. Because he wanted to get sick for a multitude of reasons. The cannibalism, the easiness of feasting on human flesh, his situation and the fact that despite everything Will was back to being used as he was before and during his incarceration. Through the haze of getting lost in books and routine, Will's mind apparently never stopped doing what Jack had wanted him to do in the first place!

He was here working! Working and falling apart and wondering when the last of him would be shattered for that work or amusement.

“May I be excused.” Will asked though it was a farce as he was already standing and coming short of running from the room with one destination in mind. The guest bathroom he's been using. In the corner of his eye, he last saw everyone standing and Alana was calling out his name. There was legit concern choking the air behind him, but that didn't stop him from closing the door and locking it. Idly he wondered if it was arrogance that kept Hannibal from

taking that ability to lock doors away during Will's stay or if it was a momentary lapse in judgment.

Not that it mattered as everything he ate that day came up leaving Will heaving over the toilet with tears dampening his cheeks and obscuring his vision. They didn't stop as Will muffled himself despite the dampness he felt. His stomach clenched with the emotions of hurt and anger. Everything he's been feeling only seemed to re-ignite and stomp any foolishness that told him that he could very well be getting better slowly despite his suspicions and doubts under this roof. One would think emptying the contents of his stomach or sobbing in front of the toilet would relieve him of some of the pressure those emotions brought with them.

But it didn't.

Will could do nothing but clutch at the toilet bowl and ignore how his knees throbbed in time with his fast paced heartbeat. This dinner only served to show Will once more that despite everything he was put to work and dangled in the lion's den to fetch evidence at his expense. For the first time; Will didn't know who's betrayal was worse. Hannibal Lecter who led Will into believing that he made a friend, that there was someone he can trust with his mind and with himself. Or with Jack Crawford who spoke of watching his back, giving him a way to do what he wanted to do before he became a teacher.

It hurt!

And there had to be a way to just ease that pain and the pressure building inside of him that kept the tears coming and kept his stomach heaving despite being hollowed out. It was when Will looked up at the mirror that his wrist throbbed and an idea cut through everything else he was feeling and that only cemented Will's intentions as he got up on shaking legs to watch as his fist created the tool of his relief be made.

With his tool in hand, Will stumbled back and sat down with his back to the tub and rolled up his sleeve. This isn't suicide because Will didn't want to die or at least that is what he told himself. No, this was just like releasing a valve to let go of some of that pressure. Will heard his voice being called by panicked voices, but that was so far away. All Will could do was feel relief as that pressure seem to fade and warmth spread across his wrist and down his hand. Because this was all Will wanted peace from himself and the pressure he was under from betrayals and hopelessness and hurt.

He just wanted peace. That was all.

Only it didn't last long as his mind snapped back into place as his wrist was taken into a firm grip and his arm pulled up. Reality seemed to fall back into place and whatever peace he had, real or not was gone in an instant the second he made eye contact with Hannibal. Hannibal who seemed to be upset and angry, Will could only guess what caused such reactions out of the usually emotionally controlled man. Despite this, Will found himself opening his mouth and asking one simple question.

“Why?”

There were voices behind Hannibal, feminine and concerned. Scared even. Will wanted to ask again, see what reason Hannibal would give and if it matched Will's guess.

“I'm trying to help you.” Five simple words were all that were given, and they could mean so much, and they could mean very little. It was those words that brought everything into sharp focus for Will. The beating of his heart and how small the space was around himself and Hannibal. It didn't matter that Alana and Abigail were at the bathroom door in shock and horror at the scene before them. All Will knew was that the same wrist he cut before was being held tightly and up in Hannibal's hand. A hand towel wrapped tightly around his wrist just under the firm grip. It used to be white.

“What...” *Impossible!*

“Will, I really am trying to help you. Let me help you.” The words were quiet, and as far as Will could hear, they were sincere. Of course, Will tried not to believe those words because how could he try to help Will now after everything that has happened. After what's been done to Will. It left Will shaken enough that he couldn't voice his thoughts in regards to Hannibal's words. It left one option open to Will at this moment, and that was eye contact. And that only seemed to back up those words as those maroon tainted eyes held emotions both old and new.

It was genuine, the expression and the words. It should be impossible, and it certainly was unfair. But there it was right in front of Will. Will felt something crack in him, a bit of his resolve and it was far too soon for Will to see if it was a good thing or not.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, sometimes I have a slight head-cannon that Will Graham's first friend was books. Dogs of course became his first living friends. Believe it or not, this is a turning point for Will.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was almost comical at how easy anger could flare up and smother everything in its path. The exhaustion Will felt was burned away. All of the sorrow and all of his pain. And just as quickly, it could turn to smoke and leave Will with that overbearing feeling of exhaustion weighted down with everything else. Only this time there was something different there. It was just unknown to him. Will didn't even know where to begin to understand what that was or how to get to it. Or if he should at all.

His name was being called, the voice calm but concerned. It matched the hand on his face -

Hannibal's hand. Will was looking away from him, not entirely sure when that happened so Will forced himself to refocus on the doctor in front of him.

“You want to help me?” Will wanted his words to be filled with all of his anger and pain, things he had every right to feel. Everything he should feel because that would be normal for someone whose been through what he has. And yet his words were nothing more than whispers. Private, hallow and tired. How could Hannibal help him? After everything the man has done to him. Let his mind burn, provoking it and framing him for something he didn't do. Letting Will be put in that place and cutting off a girls ear. Abigail's ear!

“Yes.” A confirmation and Will wanted to scoff at him, but that required more energy than Will wanted to spare him. Just outside of the bathroom stood Alana with her phone out and hands shaking. She was speaking though the words sounded far away to Will, he couldn't make out what she was saying. Though Will could easily guess what she was saying and what that phone was for. It was an invitation to have more people view him like this and Will felt sick with shame and embarrassment. Will hoped that Hannibal could see that and do something about it. Save Will from further humiliation.

A slight tilt of his head and Will wanted to hope that Hannibal will understand what needs to be understood.

“Put away the phone, I have this under-” Hannibal started to say, and Will hated the relief he felt. But it was there, and Will nearly sagged with it.

“He's bleeding out in your guest bathroom! In what way do you have this under control!” Alana's words are filled with anger and panic, and Will doesn't think he's ever seen her like this before. Feeling things so openly for him. Fear for him and the state Will was in. Will should be thankful that someone has that sort of concern for him, concern enough to feel fear in his regard. And yet all Will could feel right now was smothered and cornered. He didn't know how to react to it and worse yet he didn't have the energy to give in regards to reacting to her and her fear.

There was a quiet sort of menace to Hannibal now, having him vocally being denied and argued with. Will understood that this was not a situation to be fighting him.

A second later, it was gone, and Hannibal was speaking again. Alana seemed to hesitate and made her displeasure known as she reluctantly left the doorway with Abigail in search of something.

It was only Will and Hannibal now.

“I'm going to check to see if the bleeding has stopped.” Hannibal stated a moment before Will felt the tight towel being loosened around his wrist, every sensation that followed felt far away, and at the same time it was all Will could feel. The throb, the tingling and the pain. The pain was the loudest and Will wanted to look away from it. From what he has done to himself. But he couldn't. Instead, he watched as Hannibal raised himself enough to be at eye level with Will's raised wrist. Examining his wrist with a clinical detachment.

Will wondered how many people came face to face with that in their last moments, how many of them would have preferred open sadism to a detachment that would be nothing more than eerie realizations. Or did they get that sadism? Will wondered if he should ask if it would be right to ask. A curious glance his way made Will question whether or not he opened his mouth when he shouldn't have. Nothing more was said as the sound of footsteps approaching fast drew the doctor's attention. They were back with what Will assumed was a medical kit and a broom.

“We should still call-”

“No!” Will somehow found it in himself to let it be known, no one else. He didn't want Jack or paramedics or other doctors. He didn't want anyone else to see him like this. He didn't even want to see himself like this. All this was supposed to be was to release himself from the pressure that was built up and let himself feel just a bit of peace. Did he not deserve that?

The medical kit was placed down near Hannibal while Alana sat on the toilet. Abigail set herself to work in cleaning up the glass on the floor from the shattered mirror.

“Will -” Her voice was filled with compassion and Will knew that she just wanted to help, she believed having him taken to a hospital would no doubt be best for him. But all Will could do was shake his head in disagreement and looking away from her. He didn't want to see her compassion or hear her reasons. It wasn't meant to be personal.

“Alana, I know that this is hard for you. But perhaps it would be best if you take Abigail and leave. I can take care of Will, the fewer people there are the better for Will to relax and calm down.” There didn't seem to be much room for argument in Hannibal's voice, and Will wondered if Alana would relent and do as she's told or if Will would be forced to bare witness to more fighting and struggling. Will didn't know if he had much energy left to handle it at the moment.

“Hann-”

“I know you want to help, but Will would benefit on a more one on one approach. Any more people than necessary would only invite more trauma and stress.” Hannibal remained calm in his assertion, and Will almost wanted to wince in Alana's regard because she reacted as though she was slapped. Those words hurt her, enough that it seemed to gain sympathy and words as there was more said in a more sympathetic tone followed by silence and movement. Alana crouched down to his level, and her hand barely grazed his shoulder before pulling back. Will focused on her as best that he could.

Her mouth opened and closed for a moment, her words no doubt getting trapped until finally, she seemed to find some strength in her that allowed her to wish him well and say her farewells as she focused a particularly hard look on Hannibal as she stood. Will spotted a concerned look on Abigail's face as she turned to follow Alana and Will reminded himself that she wasn't Will's ghost.

“She means well.” Hannibal's voice broke through causing Will to look back towards him. He was examining Will's wrist once more briefly before lowering, an action that seemed to invite the blood back into his hand and everything to heighten enough to force a sound out of Will, one that was enough to let Hannibal know that this was hurting. A glance before movement. Will watched him carefully until he noted a syringe being pulled form the bag. Will's reaction was instant as he tried to muster up enough strength to pull away. Will remembers and knows enough that anything in that syringe won't be good for him, Hannibal can do a lot of things with drugs in syringes.

“This is a local anesthesia; it will help numb the pain in your wrist.” Hannibal explained, giving Will a choice on whether or not its used though it was ready to be used. Will focused on the pain and debated on if it was worth denying Hannibal or if Will should take a chance and let Hannibal stick him with a needle knowing what happened the last time he was at the doctor's mercy.

In the end, despite how hard it was for him Will agreed to it. Hannibal seemed pleased and went to work most likely ignoring the flinches he gained from Will. The numbness setting in came at a surprise, mostly because the syringe indeed was filled with nothing more than local anesthesia. From there the area was cleaned quickly and disinfected. Stitches followed afterwords. The cut wasn't very big and not as messy as it looked before. Will was almost impressed that Hannibal was able to take care of something like that in a guest bathroom of his house.

Once everything was finished to Hannibal's liking apparently, Will watched as his wrist was wrapped securely.

Now that everything was finished, Will felt a surge of dread curl in him. Now what? Did Will have to speak, did he invite himself to be locked up or did Will give Hannibal permission to steal away all of Will's privacy? There were so many questions and concerns now; Will didn't even know where to begin. So much in fact that Will allowed himself to be helped to his feet and led out of the bathroom before he could react to anything.

Once they were out of the bathroom, however, Will found enough strength in himself to pull away from Hannibal while putting some distance between the two of them. There was a look of concern on Hannibal's face, and Will wanted it to be a mask even when it wasn't. Not to

fool himself, Will knows Hannibal was still able to do whatever he felt necessary regardless of what he shows and doesn't show to the world or to Will himself. Abigail and Will were the latest examples of that.

Will also knows that a physical fight was out of the question. And Hannibal knows this just as Will knows he wouldn't be able to take the man on even if he tried. So neither of them moved, and no words were said. Will noted that Hannibal seemed content in letting Will make the first move here.

Not an easy thing for Will to do with everything weighing down on him. He wondered if it showed?

“What now Will?” Hannibal's question should be easy, but it isn't, and it will never be something easy. Whether that was fair or not didn't matter. Not here and Will doubted it wouldn't matter in the world beyond Hannibal's house.

“Guess that's up to you, it's always up to you.” Will shot back, he was almost surprised at the amount of bitterness put into his words.

“Not in this case.” Hannibal corrected and Will frowned. How was it Will's choice when everything up to this point wasn't up to him, Will was along for the ride in his own life with thoughts and idea's that don't line up with that life. If he did actually get the chance to make the decision, any decision. What would he choose, what would he do and above all else what should he do? For himself or for anyone else. Could and should Will make a decision to be selfish or righteous at his own expense. And he knows it would be at his own expense because Will would pay the price for decisions made by everyone else. Or pay the price for someone else's scheme or game.

So what should he do? What decision should he make?

It wasn't an easy thing for Will right now, harder than it ever has been before.

So Will did perhaps a foolish thing, but it was the honest answer.

“I don't know.” And Will didn't. Hannibal nodded, took the answer for what it was or so it seemed.

“Then perhaps we should head back to the dinning room, finish supper and turn in for the evening. Sleep on it tonight, and if you feel up to it, we can talk tomorrow.” Hannibal suggested Will knows that he would be isolated tonight with no way to get a word out or get into contact anyone. Perhaps he might not even wake up tomorrow, and Will decided that it wouldn't be a bad thing. The isolation was the unknown here, and Will didn't know how long it would last or if it was something he would be trapped with for the rest of his life regardless of how long that was. Regardless of that Will did the one thing he could do for the moment, and that was a nod in agreement.

Hannibal seemed satisfied and led Will at a safe distance back to the dinning room. Will was led to his seat while Hannibal tended to the table settings and warming up two of the plates. There was a small part of him that wanted to feel bad about ruining supper given how much

work Hannibal always puts into it. But not tonight. Instead, Will sat there obediently while he waited for Hannibal to return with tonight's supper. And when it did come back, everything was still in place and the meat still present, and Will paused at it.

Could he? Could he eat it even when Will knows what it was? That without question, it was human flesh served up as something else. To eat it, Will knows he was willingly cannibalizing someone. His judge to be more accurate. The plate before him looked normal and edible, and it was no longer filled with rot. Will didn't know if that reflected himself or if he just couldn't be bothered with anything at the moment. Was he truly that tired? Will picked up his fork expecting it to be heavy and partially surprised when it was light in his hand. Taking a bite Will felt eyes on him; he was being studied, and Will was almost tempted to ask Hannibal what he saw.

“Still to your satisfaction, I take it.” Hannibal's voice startled Will, and despite the fact that previously he didn't want to look up at Hannibal, Will did just that. There was an unreadable expression there but ill-placed caution in his voice. There was something else there as well, but Will denied it and pushed it aside. Because how dare Hannibal feel anything close to hope! Why couldn't that be an emotion that Will can have instead?

“Thought we were going to wait until tomorrow to talk?” There was anger in his voice now, but not enough to have him consider leaving the table and his food unfinished. Instead, Will took another bite and another and ignored Hannibal despite how it clearly frustrated the other man. The rudeness no doubt, it was something Will learned early on was that Hannibal was a man who hated poor manners and rudeness. But thankfully it was left at that, and Will spent the rest of dinner and the short period after in silence. Not thinking or debating over anything.

It wasn't until Will found himself laying in bed that he decided that with everything he was tired over and weighed down by. The worst of it was his state. He was tired of his state, and he didn't want to be anymore. Will didn't want to cry anymore or bare everyone else's choices for him. Will didn't want any of it.

But how could he be free of all of this? Cutting his wrist again did nothing, cutting it the first time did nothing.

So what now?

Chapter End Notes

Can't wait to start on the next chapter because Will and Hannibal have a proper sit down with each other. Hope this chapter was enjoyed.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sleep didn't come easily to Will that night and pulling himself out of bed was even harder in the morning after. His wrist throbbed and his mind was filled with thoughts and concerns. Fears and unwanted notions. There would be no hope of settling any of it or putting it in order at the moment. So Will did nothing beyond sit on the edge of his bed, confirming only moments ago that the door to his room was locked. His room was on the second floor so climbing out the window was out given that there was nothing that could aid him. Will wanted to say that he was surprised, but he wasn't. All things considering, this was a gentle approach in comparison to what could have happened. And that was Will being sliced into portions and frozen until Hannibal was ready to eat.

To his left the sound of clicking and hooves hitting the floor. Turning his head, he could see the nightmarish stag that has up to this point followed him faithfully. The creature who existed only when Will reentered the field at Jack's request. But this beast wasn't something that could be matched to Jack in any way. It could, however, be placed with Hannibal. How and why was beyond Will at the moment, he didn't even know what it represented. Something cooked up in his fevered mind, and now with a clear mind, the answer followed his Encephalitis. Gone.

The nightmarish stag was different from the skeletal blackened husk of a creature that came to Will in Hannibal's place at times. Both could be put with Hannibal. But only the stag stood with Will.

The question was, what did it represent and why was it back now? It's lingered and stood with Will during his time in BSHCI and before that, but in Hannibal's house, it was gone until now. It was a question Will had to answer later, and there was another matter at hand was more important. The one that kept him up most of the night and weighed him down when he tried to get up in the morning.

What now?

There was no question of who Hannibal is and there was even less doubt in the fact that Hannibal was aware of it. The locked door only confirming it. There was also the matter of Jack and his role in this. Putting Will to work even in the state that he is in, something that was normal at this rate. Will was easy to sacrifice in favour of catching the killer. And this time literally having Will live with the killer in order to catch the killer. A risky move. It was a literal sacrifice. Will was served up in hopes for evidence. So than what would happen to Will afterwards, if Jack was lucky in his gamble and if Will were to survive their games. Would Will finally be able to rest? Or would Will be thrown into the next case and the case after that. An endless cycle that Will would be powerless to fight against.

Because lives are at stake.

But what about Will's life? Anger curled in Will's stomach, he didn't know what to do with that anger so he sat with it while trying to think things over. Hannibal was a trickier person to figure out, but in the end the core want was simple. It was just everything else muddled with it that Will wasn't sure of. Everything the man wants is something Will doesn't know if he could give or should give after what's been done. Which leads back to the locked door and other outcome. What should Will do when it seems like he has no way out but to hallow himself out and play a part or die.

But wasn't that something he was aiming for? To die? To be free of all of this?

A headache was blooming setting everything else on heightened edge and his forehead to make contact with his palms as he rested his elbows on his legs.

“Shit.” Was the only word he could use to summarize this entire situation both outside that door and in his head. Not to mention he knows a talk is to be had, and it would be a major one. One that might very well decide on a few things between them and in regards to Will's future existence.

Will didn't know how long he sat there for not that it mattered as a knock on his door caused a shudder in his heart and his attention to be drawn upwards. Hannibal seeking whether or not he could enter and it was almost laughable considering Hannibal was the one with the key, but this was Hannibal and he liked to play on manners being kept so Will granted him permission. Will didn't dress for the day, something that was disapproved on apparently as a shower was offered with the advice to not get his wrist wet if possible. Will went with that because a shower would be welcomed, another way to ensure that he was awake enough to be able to sit through this upcoming conversation.

One that was put off until after breakfast as he found out as he made his way downstairs and found himself seated with Hannibal at the dinner table. It was only eight in the morning, and Will could have sworn it was later than that.

“I take it you didn't get very restful night?” Hannibal's voice broke through Will's inner thoughts and muses over time and the sound of clicking in the distance. Up and down the hall. His stag more active now than it has been since he got here. But it was welcomed.

“Too much on my mind.” Will confirmed as he finished his scrambled eggs, only this time with a distinct lack of meat. It was commented on and Hannibal figured it would be best to not push things at the moment and Will found himself oddly touched, it was something that was concerning but acceptable. The coffee was refilled and a suggestion in moving to another more comfortable room was made. The dishes were set in the sink and left as they were, something that shocked Will concerning the fact that Hannibal seemed to have a case of obsessive compulsion disorder when it comes to his house and office. But it only showed that the matter at hand was deemed more important than cleanliness.

And Will could agree as he was led with his coffee cup in hand to a reading room. Hannibal set claim to one chair and let Will claim the other. Will knows that this was a preparation for the worst case situation. Despite that knowledge, Will sat down and took another sip of his coffee wishing for something stronger than caffeine. Will focused on finishing his coffee while trying to find the right way to start this conversation, the right way of figuring things

out between them. Hannibal thankfully let Will have the silence as he sipped at his own coffee as opposed to Will's larger gulps.

“You betrayed me.” Too vulnerable of a statement, but there it was. The truth of the matter put down between them, perhaps the biggest upset between the two of them. All else could fall into those three words, of course, it wasn't the cause of everything in Will's reactions and choices thus far. But it was no less important. Hannibal opened his mouth to say something only for Will to cut him off, “I'm not finished.” Will watched as Hannibal gave him a hard look before relenting and letting Will have the chance to get everything out.

“You let my mind burn, you framed me for murder and you cut off Abigail's ear to shove down my throat. You let things fall into place after that, let me get arrested and put in there.” Will stated and old anger curled in his stomach and his own voice echoed in his mind promising a reckoning. There was also the statement, a declaration that Hannibal abandoned him and left him to be ravished by the justice system for things he didn't do. Let Will bare this alone. Hannibal knows how Will felt about places like the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Or any hospital like that. Yet let it happen all the same.

And yet it wasn't only Hannibal who did that to him. Hannibal didn't shoulder all the blame, only a large percentage of the earliest stages of what happened to him. Others had parts in it as well.

Now Will lets Hannibal have the chance to speak, to turn things around on Will or give an explanation that put the blame elsewhere or nowhere. Will didn't know, and even less knew what to expect in how things were going to go. When Hannibal didn't say anything, Will looked away from him and back to his empty cup wishing once more for something stronger.

“Your letter stated as much, but most of it seemed uncoordinated and rambled enough that Jack passed it off.” Hannibal said and Will let out a bitter sound. Of course the letter was brought up and of course, Hannibal was already aware of Will's thoughts and feelings on the matter. The click of an empty cup being set down on a coaster was the only sound for what felt like an eternity between them. What could Will say to that anyway? He could say that Jack put Will here because those words weren't as passed off as Hannibal stated. But those words stayed trapped in his throat and Will didn't know how long that would be.

“I said a lot of thing in those letters.” Will stated, and he wondered what else could have been in that letter. Will wasn't in a good place when he wrote it, and Will didn't think over what he wanted to write. He just wrote. A vain attempt at getting things out of his system. Good advice, but still something that didn't help in the long run.

“You did.” Hannibal acknowledged, and Will didn't know what to think of that not that he had long when Hannibal continued, “You feel I abandoned you as well.” It was clear that Hannibal disagreed on that and Will wanted to rage against him. The noise in his head seemed to spike, and Will was almost convinced his ears were going to start bleeding from burst eardrums with how loud it felt. This was a mistake! Will's palms felt sweaty and absentmindedly Will rubbed them on his pants. “And hurt by me especially.” Hannibal's voice was closer than before.

Hands captured his own and Will felt the world screech to a stop around them. Will was firmly reminded to breath, something he did as his eyes found Hannibal's.

It wasn't fair! Because the answer to a question Will didn't know to ask until now was right there. A twisted play on what should have been an innocent action.

“You -” It wasn't fair. It truly wasn't, but it was there and Will had to bring it to life as he brings killers voices to life from where they were engraved in victims, “- You wanted – wanted to help me.” The words felt sharp enough to cut his throat as they came forth. And Hannibal said nothing, Will took it as encouragement to continue to carve out his own throat with what was hard for Will to see because the humanity in it was not fair and in any rational world wouldn't fit something and someone like Hannibal.

“You wanted me to – you wanted a friend who was like you.” The grip on his hands was tight, so tight that it felt like bones were being rubbed against each other and Will couldn't break free of that grip and those eyes that bore right into him. All of the emotion was buried in those eyes while the face reflected nothing to the world. Not even the barest twitch. Like marble.

“You want to be seen.” Will wanted to choke on imagined blood and drown in everything as Will's mind pieced things together in a way that only left cracks and splinters. It was too much! Too much! Yet Will continued onward because there was no going back from this, “You've been alone for so long only to be tempted by something human.” A head tilt, it was the first reaction since this conversation started. Will's own personal flaying. The sound of shattering echoed in a hallway somewhere and Will didn't know what to do with that or how it was there. Even the hooves from his nightmarish stag is nowhere to be found.

It was only Hannibal and Will.

But, hasn't it always been that way since they met?

The silence stretched between them, and it felt like they both were at a point in their lives where things can go either way for both of them. Death and destruction, reconciliation and mending. And Will knows all it would take was one move, one word to push it to either direction. And Will didn't know which way it would go or which way it should go. More importantly, which way did Will want it to go?

Will opened his mouth, not sure of what he was going to say now but he knows something had to be said. Only a hard knock on the door startled Will and released Will's hands.

“Remarkable boy.” Hannibal's words were barely above a whisper. It was the only thing that was allowed to be said at the moment as Hannibal abruptly stood and exited the room no doubt putting on a mask that fit enough so that whoever was at the door wouldn't be aware of this conversation. All the while Will couldn't bring himself to move, not even his hands that were left unattended in his lap.

All the while Will felt like every nerve ending was exposed and raw and his mind even louder than he had thought possible.

What should he do now, knowing what he knows?

In the distance the sound of Jack being greeted by Hannibal.

My Tumblr page is: http://justsimplymeagain.tumblr.com/ feel free to check it out or pop by to ask a question or two.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I'm genuinely shocked that I've finished another chapter. I'm quite pleased with their conversation thus far, it's not quite finished yet. These two need to work a few dozen more things out and unlike in the show they can use their words like semi-functional adults. Though let's see if that helps them out here.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will sat there alone listening to a few different things. The pounding of his heart. Jack's raised voice and Hannibal's more steady voice that was meant to persuade and calm down Jack. All while Will scrambled to try and figure out what to do before Hannibal returned. Because Will knows it would be the deciding moment, the finishing of their interrupted conversation. It would seal Will's fate either way. Lead him to live a life that Will didn't know if he wanted and if he could survive that life or Will would meet his end in this house.

What could he do to ensure that his last moments aren't spent in this house?

The thought brought up a broken and bitter sound, barely audible past his lips. How twisted was that? To try and live when the possibility of dying by someone else's hand opposed to his weak attempts at taking his life where he didn't struggle against it at all. Will was more than willing in those times to just tip his head back and let his stream carry him away from everything he was forced to deal with and bare.

But not when there was the possibility of someone else taking his life away from him, Will knows he would resist at that moment. Was it enough of a change with himself? No, probably not but Will wasn't in a position to answer that question. And it wasn't quite as necessary to answer as he waited to see what would happen. If Jack would get his way and push his way in and put Will in a position he didn't know if he was ready to handle, a dangerous situation as well. Or if Hannibal would come back after sending Jack away. Leaving Will to deal with a life-changing conversation. Both weren't the best choices. Not for Will.

But there he sat.

All the while trying to figure out what to do with what he found out about Hannibal. The cannibalism, the murder and the need for a friend. The last being the most human of traits and by some twist of fate the most vulnerable. It was the last part that had stripped Will of his voice and ability to decide on what to do for the moment. After all, how could you handle a situation where you find out that your greatest betrayer was vulnerable just like you? It brought things down to a level where Will didn't think they would be on again, if ever. Not since before everything.

What do you do with that? What could there be done with that?

Would it be enough to change things? For Hannibal, for Will, and in extent for Abigail. The real Abigail and not Will's murdered ghost. Will didn't know. It was too soon and too many unknowns and walls.

“Jack!”

There was accusation and alarm in Hannibal's voice, enough to stir Will from his thoughts and force him into a more straight posture in his chair as he listened to the sound of heavy fast paced footsteps leading his way. Jack was coming, and he was angry, and Will knows now that it won't matter if he had the energy to deal with that or not because here Jack comes. Will watched as his back stiffened as Jack entered the room. Without any thought, Will hid his latest attempt on his wrist. Only realizing a moment later that he failed as Jack zeroed in on it. Will opened his mouth and closed it, not sure what to say and feeling like a child caught doing something he shouldn't have. There was an uneasy sense of shame that came with that leaving Will floundering.

Hannibal entered the room behind Jack and Will had to shudder because of the sheer volume of cruel intentions and anger in those eyes. There was a lot of accusation and blame there as well, Hannibal no doubt far from pleased at the blatant disrespect and interruption brought by Jack's impromptu visit. Will wondered if Jack read those eyes correctly or just saw the anger and disapproval as most would.

Jack turned to Hannibal, posture full of accusation and demand. Going so far as insisting and ordering Hannibal to leave the room leaving Will tense as he wondered who would bend first.

This has become that dangerous position Will knew could happen.

Once more it was Jack who is pushing for things to happen on his terms, regardless of the cost. And perhaps for the first time since everything started, Will's anger at Jack was greater than his resentment towards Hannibal. Will's bitterness and his hurt only seemed to add fuel to the fire. Will didn't know if he was in any position to tell Hannibal to leave or stay or to tell Jack to leave or stay. And for the moment, consequences be damned, Will didn't care. He'll care later, and it would only serve to send his stomach into fits.

“Jack.” Will's conversation with Hannibal was put on hold, right now it was clear that Jack had to be handled and Will had to decide on what to do with him and with the shared history he had with Jack. It wasn't what Will wanted to do, not after having his foundation and the previous picture of Hannibal cracked and shattered in places. Taking some of the anger and hurt he felt and swapping it with understanding, whether that will change things, in the long run, is yet to be seen. Things could still go bad, and Will's hurt and betrayed stance could still rule out in the end of the day. But that had to take a backseat for the moment.

Instead, Will forced himself to focus on Jack while Hannibal disapproved but kept that hidden away while Jack behaved like he won something. Will relented with his jaw tight and body curled to shield himself. Jack wants to talk, so that's what he'll get. In the corner of his eye, he watched as Hannibal left the room with a posture of reluctance.

Jack sat down where Hannibal previously sat.

Jack's first question was about Will's wrist; the concern was genuine, and it only served to anger and frustrate Will further. How could he be concerned and still doing what he's doing now? Putting Will here and now putting everyone in a position that could turn bloody.

Will stolen a moment while reigning himself in as best as he could, which was harder than he wished it would be. But in the end, he told the truth and told Jack that what happened with

Will's wrist was his attempt at gaining some release. There was disapproval in Jack's face, and Will couldn't look at him. Couldn't stand the sight of him so Will focused forward. There was nothing said on that, what could there be said? Jack wasn't here for that despite it being a concern all the same. Jack wasn't here for Will.

“How are things here? What have you been up to?” And that proved it, and Will lets that be seen with a tight and bitter stretch of his lips, it was too ugly to be a smile. Of course, Jack couldn't come out and ask if Will found human flesh or a kill chamber or discover Hannibal sneaking out at night to kill someone. Not when someone could be listening. Rather than answering his question right away, Will let himself remember a situation like this back while he was trapped in BSHCI and a visit from Beverly. Jack was here to see how he was but more so to see what he's discovered.

“Reading. Talking. Trying to figure out what triggered me this time so I can stop seeking a bloody release.” Will said, it was the truth, but it wasn't what Jack wanted. And it was obvious, and Will focused forward with everything he could because he didn't want to see Jack or that disapproval or be reminded that Will isn't a person. He was a tool to be used by Jack, and there was a time when Will wanted Jack's respect, and he wanted recognition of some sort from the man. Only after a moment did Will add, “I've been trying to see if there's a way to put myself back together after everyone took chunks out of me.” Will knows that Jack wasn't happy with what he heard, Jack wants evidence and Jack wants to catch the Chesapeake Ripper and all Will wants is to be left alone and be okay for once. Jack seemed to stir briefly before settling further into the chair, no doubt trying to find a careful way of navigating this conversation.

Jack opened his mouth before closing it, no doubt thinking better of what he was about to say. Or so Will thought.

“We've stalled in most of our cases, especially regarding the Ripper. The suspects we have aren't adding up and I ne...” Jack started, voice firm and with enough disapproval and dissatisfaction that Will found his teeth grinding. Will knows that this as other situations would lead Will into tucking his tail in and saying yes sir to Jack despite the risks to his health. Will can see it clearly now, every case he's worked on and every moment when Will tried to go to Jack for help or to have him see that Will wasn't okay with what he was doing. All of it leading to him putting himself last and pushing himself further in trying to do as Jack wants him to do.

“What do you want from me!” Will finally snapped, ending what Jack was going on about. It was a fair question and a legitimate demand for an answer. Any answer at this point. Though Will already knows what Jack wants.

“What do I want?!” Jack snapped, possibly forgetting the state Will was in and what's happened over the past months. Or he didn't care, and Will didn't know which it would be but all he knows is he finds himself standing in an attempt to put some distance between himself and Jack's anger. It didn't work of course because Jack was standing as well. This was a reminder of so many times before when Will tried to back out of a case or just try to get Jack to give him some much needed time only to find personal space invaded and empathy assaulted while Will does what Jack wants regardless.

It wasn't Jacks fault, though, not completely. Will knows this thanks to his skills and his empathy. He understands Jack very well. He knows why Jack does what he does and what Jack wants. And that was to solve cases, catch killers and save lives. Will wants the same thing, but at what cost?

“What I want is to know whether or not you did anything here other than read or find releases?” Jack's voice was angry, and he must have realized what he said too late because there was regret in his eyes and watching Jack take a few steps back and out of Will's personal space only showed that regret further. This wasn't an act to manipulate. Will wondered if he would apologize? Not that it would matter, Will closed his eyes trying to scramble inward and find a right response other than shutting down or letting his anger vent out.

“Will I-” Jack started, and that was all it took.

What should he do! What could he do!

In the end, Will fled. It was the safest option for Will, and it got him out of that room and maybe if he was lucky enough out of a dangerous position. The last part still depended on Hannibal though. Hannibal who betrayed and abandoned him used him as the fall guy and let his mind burn. But he was also the man who stopped the bleeding and got Will out of that place, was the first person in a long time to make Will feel like someone worthwhile and not just for his skills. Hannibal was his friend before everything happened and Hannibal was someone who Will found himself bonding with on a level where things were no longer fitting as they used and Will considered making changes for that connection to improve.

But what to do with that, or how to think was beyond Will. And it wasn't something to take into account. Not now, not after everything and instead Will sat on the floor at the end of his bed and waited. He couldn't hear anything other than the front door close. Jack was gone. He had to be. By the time Will heard footsteps, everything was starting to go numb from Will remaining in the same position. Hannibal knocked and asked for entry.

And Will grants it. And Will saw that he was carrying a tray, it was rude that Will didn't open the door. Not that Will cared at the moment.

“There was too much going on in my head, and Jack's words were too much, didn't know what else to do but run.” Will explained as he moved for the first time since he sat there to look at his bandaged wrist and saying, “Surprised I didn't seek to relieve myself as I did last night.” There was no response from Hannibal yet. Instead, he set the tray down beside Will and sat on the other side of that tray. Putting himself on Will's level like he used to.

“I for one am pleased that you didn't.” Hannibal stated before explaining the tea he brought up. Tea designed and brewed with the specific intentions of calming nerves down. Will accepted a cup and didn't even consider that it could be anything other than the tea Hannibal mentioned. Will noticed after a few sips that the teacup had gold lines in it. Will frowned, he knows there's a name for that.

“Sometimes I drop a teacup onto the floor; oftentimes I'm disappointed when it doesn't come together again.” Hannibal explained, and Will wondered if this was a finely crafted

manipulation technique. Not that it mattered to Will at the moment, the tea was working well and Will felt himself slowly relax.

“Why?” Will found himself asking while running his thumb across a long thin line of gold. Did that mean these were special cups? Did Hannibal bring these out for anyone or was this a moment where they would be needed?

“Memories Will, I have a mind full of them. Like you, I can't turn things off so...” Hannibal explained, and Will got the distinct notion that he was pleased with how things were going between them at the moment. The quiet moment and the nakedness in their shared situation. Was this what Hannibal wants, this shared moment? Will would have jumped at the chance to have that before, and he doesn't know if he could now. With everything, that has happened between the two of them. But that was hardly the point at the moment as Will pushed on with this conversation.

“You find a way to release some of the pressure by breaking teacups.” Will added, wondering if he was right. He could be wrong, but he doubted it. Will was good at filling in blanks. He always has been.

“In some ways, yes.” Hannibal confirmed, and Will felt sleepy all of a sudden. Closing his eyes for a moment before opening them when he felt the cup being taken from him and Hannibal was crouched in front of him, head tilted for a moment before saying, “We're going to have to find a better release for you. I don't want you cutting yourself again Will, do you understand me?” There was a firmness to those words that nearly stole the breath from Will's lungs. Will could only offer a brief nod as his response, and it seemed to be enough as Hannibal set Will's cup down on the tray, it was empty as opposed to Hannibal's which was full. Will frowned at that before turning to Hannibal with an accusation dying in his throat.

“Valerian tea. A potent sedative and effective pain killer. Often used by insomniacs to help them sleep. And you need sleep Will; it's been a trying morning. You'll be awake for dinner. We can carry on our conversation then. But I would rather you get some rest first. You need it.” Hannibal explained before helping Will to his feet without waiting to see if Will wanted it first, not that it mattered because sleep sounded like a good idea right now.

Maybe it'll settle things down in his mind?

Help him figure out what to do from here on out?

Chapter End Notes

I read up on Valerian tea, the bit about it being used by insomniacs was said to be in a Swedish study regarding valerian's tranquilizing effect. I can't say for myself on what it's like or how fast acting it is, but it sounded like it was the best option to use for this case. Will is going to be up by dinner (more or less) and we'll get to see the proper end to the start of their conversation with no interruptions of Jack lol.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

His limbs heavy and well rested, Will slightly stirred with a deep breath in and a lazy stretch. He'll have to get up soon, his dogs would need to be let out for their morning bathroom run. The clicks of his dogs should be heard any moment now, they stirred when Will did. Only there was nothing to be heard beyond the faint sounds of someone moving in a kitchen. It was this that forced Will to open his eyes and stare at surroundings that were becoming more familiar than they had any right to be.

The sharp pang in his wrist only seemed to force reality onto Will, and it made him feel heavy with something else instead.

It was dark out, a fact that made Will slightly disoriented and with a fuzzy mind Will tried to peace everything together and what time it was. Not an easy task when all Will wanted to do was close his eyes and let the world fade away for another few minutes. But, that was something Will couldn't do so he went with the alternative. Pulling himself from where he's been sleeping and took note of the water and a slip of paper waiting for him on the bedside table. It drew Will closer until Will had the glass in his hand and the paper in his other hand while he sat at the edge of his bed. Will drank the water knowing it wouldn't be drugged or laced with anything. Hannibal already drugged him with a potent tea and they had a conversation to finish. So there was no point in drugging Will.

Once Will finished most of the water, he turned his attention to the note in his hand:

'Dinner will be finished by 7:00 pm if you're feeling up to it.
-H'

Will took a look at the clock set facing the bed. It said that it was 6:45 pm, that meant Hannibal timed it right. That served to show he had previous experience dealing with teas like this and the implications were clear enough that it had Will torn between seething and just feeling too exhausted to do anything besides finish his water and contemplating on how things will go. It wasn't an easy task all things considering. Because what he's going to be dealing with in regards to Hannibal is only the tip of the iceberg for Will. It wasn't just that anymore.

It was Jack, Alana, Abigail, and himself. No one was untouched and no one had a clear cut way for Will to figure out what to do about them or himself. It was much easier when it was just Hannibal. When Will could focus everything on him, the anger and betrayal. Alana may not have betrayed him, but she was quick to believe in his guilt and she hasn't once dealt with that or her belief in that regarding Will. She was walking on eggshells with Will and it put him on edge. Abigail was an unknown to him, Will may care for her but that doesn't take away the fact that Will doesn't know where she stands or what part did she play beyond donating an ear and even that was up in the air for Will. He didn't know if it was willing or not. It was an uncomfortable feeling.

Then there was Jack. Jack who put him here against his will, knowing what they know and knowing what state of mind Will is in. Getting mad at Will when he realized that all Will was doing, as far as he knew was reading books and seeking release. Never mind the fact that his way of seeking release involved a sharp piece of a mirror and his wrist. It was becoming clear, painfully clear that Jack won't stop until he gets the killer he's after and than the killer after that and the one after that. It was endless because there's no shortage of killers in the world.

And Will felt tired thinking about that already.

The last was Will Graham. Himself. Will didn't know where he stood with Hannibal or with any of them and that unknown was enough to set his teeth on edge and a permanent headache to bloom behind his eyes and explode in his mind. His feelings were even more twisted and blurred than ever before. In regards to everyone! Especially Hannibal. Hannibal who's done all of this to Will and yet Hannibal who got him out and for the most part is taking care of Will.

Checking the time, it was now 6:53 pm.

Will knows what Hannibal wants, they covered that partially before Jack interrupted their conversation. But that wasn't the end of it, not for either of them. Secrets may be out in the open but there was still so much hidden away that it would take some time for either of them to figure this out and that was only if no one dies or gets arrested.

6:55 pm

With more strength than Will thought he had, Will pulled himself from where he sat and exited his room. His door was unlocked and will found himself hoping that it won't ever be locked again, but experience has taught him to not get his hopes up. Expect it to be locked tomorrow morning. With that in mind, Will made his way downstairs listening to the sounds in the kitchen and a soft classical song playing in the background. Hannibal no doubt was finishing the last minute requirements before platting any of it.

Will entered the kitchen while Hannibal's back was to him. And not for the first time, Will cursed his own mind. Because now when he looks at Hannibal things are divided and torn. That was a man who wanted a friend, but that man was also the one who caused Will the most grief. Will wanted his friend back, but could he trust Hannibal to not hurt him again. Will hated it. Hated it enough that he wanted to smash every plate and tip over everything that had food onto the floor, food that looked far too tempting than it had any right to.

Instead Will stiffened himself up and made himself known. Hannibal didn't seem surprised to see him and commented that he was right on time and asked if he would mind setting the table. A more casual setting, so that meant across from each other. Will couldn't find his voice, so he did what he was asked and didn't care in the slightest if he got the placements wrong in some way. Casual to Hannibal meant something different than it did to Will. Hannibal followed with the plates and a description of what they were eating tonight.

Will wanted to ask who it was, but refrained instead he focused on eating and wondering how to restart their conversation and what to say when that time comes. Hannibal seemed more

content to just eat as well, not bringing up any sort of conversation as he took his time eating his meal. There was wine at the table this time and Will was glad for the alcohol content in it, though he wished for something stronger. But wine will do for now. Once both his meal and his wine was half finished Will finally felt as ready as he was going to ever be.

He needed this conversation finished.

“Why?” Will asked and Hannibal made it clear he wanted more specifics than this, so Will gave that to him, “Why did you do this to me specifically? Why let my mind burn?! My mind Hannibal! Why frame me?! Letting me be put into that hellhole! Cut off Abigail's ear even after every word uttered about protecting her?!”

Will felt his heart race in his chest and he wondered if Hannibal could see that. Will had to look away from Hannibal for a moment, though it was clear with the clink of the fork being set down neatly Will had all of Hannibal's attention, or as much as he wanted to give. Will didn't know if he wanted to hear any of the excuses, not when there was a question coming to life that made Will almost sick with it and doubt if he would be able to bare the answer.

But he had to know regardless of how he felt.

“Did you enjoy it? Was pushing my buttons and doing this to me, fun for you? Do you even regret any of it!? Because I'm getting mixed signals from you and I don't know what to do with that!” Will pleaded for a kind answer, if Hannibal is capable of giving him a kind answer. But at the same time, Will didn't want Hannibal to lie to him. He's had enough of those for a lifetime and he deserved some honesty even if that honesty was destructive.

“Yes and no.” And with those three words Will felt his heart fall in his chest and regretted ever exiting his room. Will wanted to say something, only he didn't know if he wanted to yell it or whisper it. Both felt like a defeat somehow and Will didn't even know how that was, it was enough to feel tears forming. Will couldn't even get a simple 'oh' out even as he opened and closed his mouth. What was the yes for and what was the no for? Will didn't know and it hurt in how much he dreaded both.

Will heard a sigh, but that was about it. He was too focused on the thudding of his heart and staring at the floor beside him. Pain blossomed in his wrist and it wasn't until his hands were caught that he realized that he was pressing on the wound, Will apparently pulled inward enough that he didn't even realize that Hannibal moved from his seat to beside Will, pulling a chair up and everything. Will couldn't raise his gaze past the hands that held his own tightly.

It took a few minutes more to register that Hannibal was asking Will to look at him. And somehow, Will managed to do just that and more by making eye contact and nearly gasping. He will never be prepared for the amount of emotion Hannibal could possess in his eyes.

“You're jumping to conclusions, so please allow me to clarify further.” Hannibal stated, voice calm and quiet as if he was trying to keep Will from getting spooked and fleeing. It would be comical if not for the significance of this situation and the conversations they have held since this morning. Will nodded, he didn't know if Hannibal actually needed that to continue or not. Not that it mattered, Hannibal gained one all the same.

“Do keep in mind, that I didn't enjoy the outcome. Far less than I expected myself to. You ask if it was fun for me, yes some of it was. Watching you find your way even when you were blinded by your fever, your intelligence and wit was as sharp as ever. It was stunning. But the fear, your fear was just as present and only increasing as your fever got worse. That I had hoped would be burned away by the end, fear of what you can do, what you are.

Did I enjoy framing you, yes, but not because it was you exactly. It was a game Will, a cruel one that cost lives. But a game that stretches back even before you worked my case. Back even farther than when Jack worked my case, pulling rookies out of the classroom and sending them into the lions den metaphorically speaking. But. But you were never a casualty to this game, nor an intended victim. If you were, a little more than a burning mind would have been done. Isolating you and putting you into that place was intended to wake you up.

As for Abigail, she was not originally part of the plan. When she came into our lives, it wasn't with the end game of cutting off her ear and putting it down your throat. I did intend for her to disappear from the world, but not out of anything beyond what was intended for you. She is so afraid of herself and the world Will, like you. The place I kept her, was intended to help her find her way without being pressured. She was farther ahead in things then you. You required my direct attention.” Hannibal explained and Will could do nothing but listen and absorb what he was saying. And if Will understood, and he's sure that he does. Hannibal had good intentions in his own way, though the way he went about it was destructive and painful for Will.

A humourless laugh managed to escape Will as he leaned back and free from Hannibal's touch almost missing the warmth of his hands.

“This was intended to what, help me?” Will found himself sounding bitter and angry. How was this supposed to help him!

“Yes.” A confirmation was all that was given, and it only served to rile Will up further.

“So you don't regret any-” Will forced with a surprising amount of anger in his voice. His exhaustion and everything else seemed so far away at the moment.

“Please do not put words into my mouth Will.” Hannibal's own words came out sharper than intended most likely, control not as secure at the moment and became clear to Will that this was an emotional conversation for Hannibal as well and not one he had to ever deal with in the past. Will didn't know if that was a good thing or not and later he would decide that he liked that he was the one to gain such a reaction out of him.

“Then what?!” Will snapped, he didn't care if it upset Hannibal or if it angered him in any way.

“I regret the outcome of your stay in Baltimore's Hospital for the Criminally Insane Will, you were not intended to try and kill yourself. Matthew Brown came to kill me for you but not because of you. You were supposed to connect with yourself while there Will, see and get to know the parts of you that you have denied so stubbornly your whole life.” Hannibal said, voice deceptively calm. It was those eyes though that gave him away, always those eyes that

were becoming so easy for Will to read and understanding so long as he had the courage to meet them.

But that courage was fleeting for the moment and Will looked away from Hannibal, not able to say anything after that. Hannibal wanted a friend, he wanted someone like him. Will knows this and now he knows that this was the driving force behind the why's to some of his questions. There was still so much that was still unknown to Will and even more that needed answers.

“I would not have left you to rot, you were supposed to come out of there better. I clearly miscalculated that place's usefulness.” Hannibal's words sounded like they were carefully chosen, as everything said before this. But Will doubted it, Hannibal seemed infected almost. But what that means was beyond Will. Instead, Will forced himself to meet Hannibal's eyes again.

“Instead I came out more broken then what I was when I went in.” Will pointed out, it was quiet but that was the truth of the matter. Will wasn't who he used to be when he went in and before he met Hannibal. Will took actions against himself that he normally wouldn't have done and perhaps in another life he would have sent Matthew after Hannibal purposely and maybe in that life Will wouldn't have taken anything sharp to himself. Who knows, maybe things would have been better for it?

But that wasn't the case, and this was all that Will had, it was a world he didn't know what to do with or how to function in.

Chapter End Notes

No their talk isn't quite finished yet. But I had to cut it off there because the chapter won't end otherwise. They have one last bit to cover and Will has to make a decision that will be made in the upcoming chapter. Also, I have a chrome add on that I'm using called grammarly so I'm trying to get things a tad bit neater at least and have gone through this entire story twice already.

Chapter 14

The admittance that came out of Will's mouth left Will shocked and it seemed to have snared and hold Hannibal's attention so fiercely that Will didn't know what to do with it. If Will had expected something to change and shift around him after coming out with that truth, he would be proven wrong. Nothing changed around him. There was nothing more than continued silence and a sudden stillness that seemed to have nothing to do with himself or what he just said but with Hannibal himself. Will made sure to keep his eye contact with the man across him, in hopes for a clue to understand and see the situation for what it is and what it was now turning into.

But nothing was found in those deceptive eyes. They just stared into Will with silence and stillness filling the air around them. The strength of that silence and stillness only seemed to grow.

That was until a sigh broke it and just like that there was movement and life once again.

And Will can breath again.

Hannibal seemed oddly satisfied, and Will had to figure out what part of Hannibal that came from.

“Admitting something important as that, is a major step in healing.” It was matter of fact and said in a manner that no doubt was practised to ensure that he doesn't gain an adverse reaction from patients, Will didn't have the energy to lash out at the fact that he was face to face with a therapist when he's stated so many times that therapy doesn't work on him. So instead he sat, not saying anything and trying his hardest to not react too much to it. He knows that Hannibal knows Will's stance on the whole matter. Will is sure of that.

Hannibal didn't seem like he was finished either, even as the doctor took a contemplative sip from his wine.

“So, now that there is acknowledgement. The question here is this; what now?” Hannibal asked, and Will had to admit that it was a fair question and Hannibal regardless of what role he was playing had a point in asking it. However, Will didn't know what to say or how to even answer it. Because there was no simple solution as there was no simple cause for Will's situation. Yes it started with Hannibal, but it didn't end with Hannibal. Yes Jack played a role, but he didn't start it. There was so many moving parts and Will knows there was nothing left for him but to deal with this. Or death.

Being that death was the second option caused Will to pause and think for a moment. Somewhere between his first cut and now, something has changed even with the second cut taking place. That something wasn't big, but it was there. Death; had become an alternative, still there but not the first choice. It was still a possibility, but it wasn't Will's only possibility.

Movement captured Will's attention, bringing it from his discovery to Hannibal. Hannibal who didn't give Will time to answer, instead, taking a bite and Will could do nothing but

watch him. Unable to move in order to take another bite but not wanting to leave the table just yet. Something that turned out to be a good thing as Hannibal fixed him with another look before swallowing.

“I can give you the pieces, give you time to pick yourself up again. This house, my presence can act as the shield for you to do just that.” The implications were seen and as clear as day. Despite the genuine vibe to them, Will knew that Hannibal still wished him to pick himself up and be something like Hannibal. What Hannibal views as his truer self. But just as importantly, there was a promise in there and Will wondered just how much that promise would stand up to everything else.

Would that shield become a sword? And will he be meeting that sharp end of it?

Will shook his head in disagreement, only the difference he felt was for something unspoken instead of what was said.

“I can't be like you, Hannibal.” Will stated with far more confidence then what he was feeling at the moment, more confidence then what he seemed to have felt in a long time. Will could almost congratulate himself, but refrained because what he could congratulate himself for could also damn him just as quickly. It all depended on Hannibal and how he decided to take those words. And worse, they both knew it.

A nod. Hannibal seemed to be satisfied, and Will was almost tempted to verbally rebel because he didn't need to be reminded of the fact that the situation depended on how Hannibal took those words. Will already was well aware of that! How could he not be, sitting here knowing what he knows?

Or so he thought.

“I wouldn't want you to be. In fact, I encourage you to not be me. I would much rather you be yourself in every way. Even if it takes you sometime getting there.” Hannibal said and Will was nearly floored by that. It went against what he was expecting out of Hannibal, because they both know it's a risk to have Will here knowing what he knows and more or less being free to do things that would and could still jeopardize Hannibal's freedom. But on the other hand, it made perfect sense because Hannibal didn't want a clone of himself. He wanted an equal. He wanted a friend to walk with him, be by his side and he by his friends side. It was almost romantic if you could forget about the blood, death and trauma that Hannibal brings with him.

Will shook his head again, finding it in himself to pick up his fork again. He didn't know if he could stomach the rest of his meal, not with the amount of thoughts buzzing in his head.

“I don't think you understand the implications of what I just said.” Will's words didn't hold the same confidence as before, but they were steady enough not to come out weak or to tremble. This time it was Hannibal who shook his head, he disagreed with what Will said, saying without saying that he understood perfectly fine and in his way had some faith in Will.

“Finish your dinner Will.”

And Will did.

That night was filled with thoughts that would not die down and let Will rest. Will had to decide if he would let himself be helped and shielded by Hannibal when it dawned on him, he already has. Ever since he came here, Will had minimal interaction with the outside world and always when he was stressed. Jack didn't have full access to him and neither did Alana. In fact, she didn't come around as much despite there being a relationship or the start of one between her and Hannibal. It was like Hannibal had cut off the rest of the world and turned his house into a fort.

No, not a fort. A boat. With Will's eyes closed, he could imagine that if he looked out his window the lights of the city would be far off on a distant shore.

Will was almost tempted to smile at that and he hated himself for it. But that was the thing, everything was torn and split down the middle and Will envied the characters in his stories or other people who had the ability to hate and despise their abusers and their betrayers. Here Will was living with his, where he wasn't before and here Will could only despise and hate him to an incomplete measure to what Hannibal actually deserved. It made Will want to scream at the unfairness to it. But that would give too much away, more than what Will has already given away.

With nothing more to do about that, Will turned away from the window and faced the door to try and will his mind into settling down for the rest of the night.

To let him sleep.

~ Next Morning ~

Will woke up to the smell of bacon. Will wondered if it was actually bacon or if Hannibal managed to work some sort of magic to get some poor soul's flesh to taste and smell like bacon. Unfortunately it was far too tempting of a scent for Will to ignore and somehow he managed to pull himself together enough to make his way downstairs to hear Hannibal talking to someone. It must be on the phone because Will couldn't hear anyone else and what Hannibal was saying was clearly an answer to an unheard question.

“I could ask. However, I'm not sure if I'm allo-” Hannibal was saying, and Will spotted an annoyed look as he was apparently cut off. Will entered the kitchen, and Hannibal wordlessly directed him to the toast. Giving Will a task to do while he manned the stove and the contents in the pans. Will did while trying to figure out what the conversation was about.

“Very well, I will call you back after breakfast to let you know.” Hannibal said, though his voice was only measured and had very little of the pleasantness that it had previously. Will could tell that whatever that conversation was about, it earned the other participant a few marks against them. How much longer until they gained a one way ticket to Hannibal's kitchen, but not as a guest to sit at his table?

“What was that about?” Will asked as he finished the last slice of toast. With no response, it was almost like Hannibal didn't hear him, but that wasn't the truth. Will knows he did.

Opening his mouth to say something else Will found himself interrupted with a calm, “Jack wants me to take you out to a crime scene. An apparent animal attack.” That confused Will, why would he be taken out to something that might be an animal attack and did Jack forget already that Will was bound to a house?

“I'm under house arrest; I can't leave your property.” Will pointed out. If there was any bitterness over that fact neither of them acknowledged it as Hannibal nodded in agreement. Before explaining that for today Jack can call a judge and get special permission so long as Will was within the presence of either Jack or someone designated to keep an eye on Will until every last bit of his charges were thoroughly investigated, and Will had his name cleared.

On one hand, there was the chance of getting fresh air that didn't involve the back yard but on the other hand there was the fact that he was inviting stress back into his life. He would be working two cases now, one with animal attacks and the other Jack's personal mission that Will didn't know what to do with now that he knows the truth even without evidence to back him up.

“Okay. Where do I sign?” Will's decision was made, and it seemed to have caught Hannibal's curiosity, and it appeared that the man who sat across from him was now invested in seeing how this goes. He knows something about this case already, but Will didn't know what. But he was going to find out. Will always finds things out, given enough time to.

The rest of the breakfast was spent with Will trying to fish out any information Hannibal has in this case. When it was clear that he won't get anything more, Will turned his attention back to the bacon.

“I can assure you, Will; that is regular bacon bought from the local butcher. I eat a lot of meat; everyone knows this, so I need receipts to show for it.” Hannibal's tone was almost playful like the idea amused him that Will thought that all of his meat would be human. Will didn't know if that should anger him or if he should just be plainly annoyed. Will acknowledged it and wondered what his angle was now. Why the sudden shift?

It was a question that chased Will as he found himself in the passenger seat and staring forward at a crime scene and shocked at how much he seemed to have missed it. Will exited the car first and found himself greeted by Beverly who had the grace to ignore the bandage on his wrist that showed just enough before Will pulled his sleeve back over it. Will followed her to where Jack was.

Just like old times, everyone was called away leaving Will with death in front of him and his mind buzzing with information playing backward than forward.

There was one difference though, even as Will's nightmarish stag was commanded and obeyed. Will wasn't the only one watching the scene unfold. Instead off to the side stood a nightmarish figure, antlered and Will knows what it was and who it stood for. A blink and it was gone and everyone was back and busy with noise and life despite the death in the air. But not Hannibal, instead he was still as the world moved around him.

And Will did his best to hold that same stillness.

Something that was easier than it should have been.

And Will thinks that in this moment, he truly see's Hannibal. Not like he did when bars separated them and the truth was cold and harsh as the stones that made up his cage back in BSHCI.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

That moment, where it was only Hannibal and himself amidst the busy crime scene lasted only mere moments before Jack approached Will wanting answers. Always wanting answers from Will. And briefly Will failed to answer, seeking out his betrayer who was also his jailor and his friend. The last part came as a surprise to Will, it made him think that somewhere along the way Will imprinted on the man despite everything he's done to Will personally. And truly, it should be more troubling than it was and Will didn't know what that said about him, it left him with temptation of hiding away from another turn of events forced onto him.

But he couldn't, he was out here in the cold at a crime scene telling Jack about another killer at another crime scene. Only this wasn't just another crime scene; this was Will's first after being wrongfully charged and caged, after cut upon cut on his once more bandaged wrist. It was that knowledge that had Will tensing up as he obediently followed after Jack or walked beside Hannibal. It followed Will back to the place Will coveted once upon a time. His old job when Will wasn't in front of a class listening to every word he said in hopes that they could follow a career that only half of them would make it into. Will wasn't known for being an easy teacher and he was good at weening out the ones who won't have the stomach for the job long term and he most certainly would not have allowed one of his students to be taken from class to work a real case.

As Will walked down the hallway, once more at Hannibal's side while following behind Jack Will could feel eyes on him. Not Hannibal's, but others. Will can almost hear whispers and without thinking Will hid his hands in his pockets so that no one can catch a glance at what he's sure they're whispering about. Besides what he was initially charged with. With every step he took the light seemed to get brighter and the whispers louder. The looks seemed to burn right into his skin through his clothing and Will wondered if this was a big mistake.

And just as things were threatening to become obviously to much for him, a hand was placed in the middle of his back guiding him towards the area where the bodies were being examined. Jack was demanding evidence, that much hasn't changed as far as Will could see. But so many other things did, everyone seemed rattled and shaken. And Will knows that it's because of his presence. He was one of them, he was a part of the team and despite the fact that he was never close to anyone per say, Will was still viewed as part of that team.

That was why it has shaken everyone to have Will charged and arrested, his life torn apart and examined as evidence. Living behind bars as someone they would normally work towards jailing under normal circumstances. Only Will wasn't just someone, not here and not to them. It left them rattled because of the obvious mistake made on everyone's part. There was nothing worse than having to be faced with your failures, and Will was a walking reminder. Only they tried to get on like everything was normal, talking about the evidence both found and speculated on. Will added his own input every now and again but mostly tried to ignore the smothering air of failure and pity.

The pity took some time to pick up on. But what clinched it was the glance Will saw Beverly make towards his wrist.

Will Graham was a man they failed, charged and had a hand in locking up. Will Graham was also a man they pitied for how low he clearly got. And it set Will's teeth on edge.

But he remained silent and bared it as best that he could, escaping the room as soon as he got the chance to. Hannibal almost close on his heels if not for the fact that Jack called him back for a quick word. Instead another set of footsteps followed Will. Lighter. Feminine. Will turned and saw Beverly walking towards him, face carefully neutral but that same pity was in her eyes just like that sense of failure. And Will couldn't stand it.

“How -” That was the only word Beverly managed to get out before Will made a gesture that managed to stop her from saying more than that.

“Don't okay, just don't.” Will forced out, hands buried in his pockets and hidden from view. Idly he noted that Hannibal was approaching and things were quiet enough for others to listen to if they wanted to. It wasn't enough to stop whatever this was, a conversation. An argument?

“Don't what?” Beverly asked, this was clearly what she wasn't expecting. But it's what she's getting and Will can see the frustration and confusion now mixing into everything else. It wasn't enough to smother out that pity and that sense of failure though and Will managed to count to ten.

“Don't do that!” Will snapped, before she could ask what Will meant he continued, “That! Right there, looking at me like that. Pity, guilt or whatever. I don't need that, I have enough shit going on in my head to deal with. I don't need to be putting up with the guilt and the pity I can easily pick up on. It's hard enough for me to do my job when that's all I see around me.” Maybe it was wrong for him to snap at Beverly, when in truth all she was going to do was ask him how he was which was more than what most have done since he set foot on that crime scene and then here at the BAU. Knowing that didn't help Will feel any better, it made him feel worse. And Will wondered if he should cut her off with an apology or just turn and hightail it out of here. Despite the fact that technically he can't leave this property without Hannibal who signed a waiver that allowed Will to leave his house while working a case and so long as it has to do with an official case and so long as he was in Hannibal's presence.

If it wasn't for the situation that he was faced with at this very moment, anger would curl in him at the aspect of being forced to bare an unseen leash and collar. As it stood, Beverly and this situation needed Will's attention and it was attention that Will had to give now that it was here. Beverly stood her ground, didn't look offended and had the decency to not get angry at Will. And Will was grateful.

“Okay. Then let's get to work.” Beverly said and Will let go of a breath he didn't know he held and for the first time since leaving Hannibal's house. Will felt lighter. Yes he was withholding the biggest fact from everyone around him, that Hannibal Lecter was the Chesapeake Ripper, but that seemed so far away and not heavy enough to weigh Will down. Something he knows he'll have to examine later on. But at the moment he with Hannibal

followed Beverly back into one of the many examination rooms here and went over old evidence to look for anything that was missed.

It seemed easier after that, the pity seemed so far away now that it didn't matter if it existed. Right now, all there was was the drive to solve a case and stop a killer from taking more lives. Will wondered idly if it was hypocritical of himself to want to stop one killer yet fail to bring the truth of Hannibal out into the light. Even though that was what Will was supposed to do, what Jack wanted him to do.

But did Will want to do that?

He should though, it was the right thing to do. The just and lawfully abiding thing to do, what Will's oath as a former special agent for the FBI and a teacher who taught students about doing just that.

It was Hannibal's idea, by the end of the day to go visit a museum under a hunch of his. Will agreed readily because that meant just a little bit longer to be out in the world rather than trapped in Hannibal's house until the next time he was allowed to leave in order to work on a case or follow a lead of Jack's. On the way Hannibal brought up Will's outburst towards Beverly and Will did what he could to shut that conversation down while giving Hannibal what he wanted from the conversation, something that wasn't easy to do when what Hannibal wanted was just more insight to what was going on with Will in regards to Beverly and the others. It was something that felt too vulnerable as it was, and Will didn't want to be faced with that while his mind should be on the case.

Not on the outburst or past trauma inflicted on him by Hannibal and the system, by Jack. And definitely not on the ache in his wrist.

Hannibal thankfully let the matter drop, for now. Will knows that it as everything else will be picked up again, but later. Right now as they entered the museum and met a young man who went by the name of Randall Teir, a former patient of Hannibal's as Will would find out by the end of his conversation with the young man who seemed fixated on Hannibal's teeth. It was a first time seeing such a facial expression on Hannibal considering how reserved the man normally was. Will watched closely and Will knew instantly, this boy was a prototype of Hannibal's. An earlier attempt at something, perhaps making a companion or grooming a killer?

But was he successful?

Will kept the thought present as he took over the conversation, not realizing that resentment entered the situation on both ends. It didn't show outright, but the tone of the conversation became cold and bitter with a cutting edge to it. Will knew by the time they were nearing the end of this conversation, Randall wanted Will dead. Jealousy was the main reason behind that and Will looked to Hannibal with a realization that this reaction wasn't discouraged by the man, but welcomed. But there was danger there as well. And Will wondered just who was at risk more, Randall who was an earlier prototype to all things in grooming murderers or to Will who was Hannibal's latest projects?

The shadows seemed to shift and grow throughout the room and bones seemed to rattle and shake with an increasing volume.

Then there was nothing, everything was normal once more and Will followed Hannibal out and to his car. All the while thinking about who Randall Teir could be to this case and thinking about what Hannibal was to Randall beyond that of a former psychiatrist. Who he was to Will. Who Will was to Randall. Was there a slot open? Would Will want that open spot? With a single motion Will put pressure on his wrist as a reminder of why he shouldn't because of what was done to and against Will thus far.

When they got back to the house, Will went up to his room to collect his thoughts before joining Hannibal at the dinner table.

“Why did you take me there, to talk to him?” Will asked and before Hannibal had the chance to answer Will continued, “It wasn't a hunch that had us going there, you know exactly who Randall Teir was and what role he played in this case?” That left the most important question forming in Will's mind. The one he wanted an answer to, more so than the other two.

“Why have us meet Dr. Lecter, knowing what he is and knowing who I am? Who you are?” What game was Hannibal playing and why so reckless all of a sudden, it didn't f it the picture that was in Will's mind. It blows everything out of the water.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it took so long to get this chapter finished. Will is going to get his answers next chapter, and a few more things will be solved for Will. Above all else, I hope everyone had a great New Years and Holidays!

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will watched Hannibal for a moment, getting nothing from him. This was a situation where Hannibal wanted Will to put the pieces together, put himself in Hannibal's shoes to understand the situation. Figure out the how and the why.

“You essentially solved the case, practically offering Randall Teir up as what? A sacrifice?” Will said, he didn't expect an answer or a confirmation. This wasn't about that as Will took Hannibal in, the way he was standing and the way he seemed to make himself open and closed at the same time. It was a gift of Hannibal's, Will noted and not for the first time. The man could be a perfect contradiction.

Like Will.

It was in part why they seemed to get on so well, or at least that's what Will figured. The more innocent reason why.

“No. Not a sacrifice.” Will corrected. His wrist throbbed, but his mind remained sharp. At least until he understood what he was seeing. Hurt, anger and feeling torn swept through him as he made himself look away. He wanted to yell and scream and point fingers. A small part of him wanted to open his wrist up and release the sudden swell of emotion he felt smothering him. But Hannibal -

Hannibal didn't want him to do that anymore and Will agreed.

“A gift.” Will managed to choke out, a gift is something that could be used for multiple occasions. Occasions fit for good times, happy times or times of sorrow and times of sought redemption.

“I did this to you -” Will could imagine Hannibal saying even as he remained silent and still and waiting for Will to come to the conclusion it was designed to be. “- to help you. But, I failed so I'll give you this to show you my sincerity.”

“An apology.” Will managed to say, a slight shift in Hannibal was his only response. Will had to turn away from Hannibal completely, but his stance open and as approachable as he could imagine himself making in a situation like this. This wasn't a rejection, Hannibal would see that.

This would be the only thing Will gets as an apology, he didn't know if he should be angry or not. Even Jack didn't come close to actually apologizing, just put him in a situation against his will. Yes, Jack regretted and felt guilty but it didn't stop him.

It wouldn't stop Hannibal either.

“W-what was he supposed to be? Originally.” Will asked, he needed an answer. He needed something, anything but lies. He's had enough of that for a lifetime. He needed something more than open manipulation, but he knows even with good intentions, Hannibal would manipulate this situation as he see's fit. It was in his nature, like a shark.

There was the sound of footsteps approaching him, Hannibal wanted to be heard and Will was struck at how alarmingly open all of this was. Where was the hidden trap? The hidden blade? When was everything going to fall apart? Hannibal stopped as soon as it was clear that Will could see him in the corner of his vision.

“A test.” Two words, but it was enough.

“To see who was the most fitting, see which pet project was successful. Which was the most worthy even?” Will explained, Will wanted to call him a narcissistic asshole. But that would be too simple of an insult, and would it even completely fit Will wondered.

“It's not going to go down the way – the way you designed it to.” Will pointed out, Will almost wished he was never taken out of this house. Almost wished he wasn't put on this case. Almost.

“Perhaps.” Hannibal was oddly calm. Will didn't know if he could trust that, before he would have found comfort because then he could have used Hannibal as his anchor to keep himself calm. But now, knowing what he knows and going through what he went through. He's not sure if he can or should.

He wanted to ask what Hannibal meant by that, but the phone rang and whatever spell the house was under was broken. Will left the room and got washed up, grabbed bandages and cleaned his own wrist. Downstairs Hannibal was on the phone talking to a patient in a calm nearly kind voice.

Supper would be cooked and served only an hour and a half later. The rest of the day passed with a near other worldly sense of normal that had Will wondering what's going to happen next.

The next day Will was surprised with a visit from his dogs and Hannibal leaving for the day. To tend to patients, to help Jack. For a good five hours Will got to be with his dogs. Alana tried to get Will to talk with little success and Will purposely failed to answer a call from Jack.

Will found himself tense.

Knowing w hat he knows, knowing who Hannibal is and who Randall was. Things were too calm. Too normal and Will didn't know when that was going to shatter.

A call from Hannibal was missed, he was at a crime scene and would be home late. Left over supper was in the fridge.

Will frowned. He wasn't hungry, so he skipped that and went upstairs to read. It was an hour later when he heard an unfamiliar sound, something being lifted and closed. Listening more

carefully, there was movement in the house that was unfamiliar.

Too heavy to be Alana's or even Abigail's. Too noisy to be Hannibal's careful quiet steps.

Will put his book down carefully. Turned the light out and made sure his own footsteps were silent as he moved from his room. Hand near his hip out of habit, there was no gun there. Odd shapes, animalistic shapes carved out and coming from the shadows.

He wasn't alone.

“A test.”

Will found himself angry. Not that he had long to focus on that anger. A body made of flesh, metal and bone collided with him. Snarling and spitting in it's rage. More animal than man. Less than elegant and controlled, savage and ill-fitting.

Not an equal. Not a match. But still useful.

Will can understand it now, even better than before. A gift this might have been, but a test at heart still. But a test for what? Will didn't know and did what he could do to push Randall off of him as he narrowly missed the snapping fangs.

It went on like that for a short while, Will dodging and putting space between himself and the snapping beast before him. Hurt at the fact that Hannibal would do this to him! Again, he was put into a situation that could hurt him. Kill him. Leave him nothing more than a husk on the ground.

The snapping beast – more animal than man lunged again, forced Will back against a wall. This failed pet project, this test was let in. Hannibal had let him in! Told him how no doubt.

And Will found himself getting angry. Put enough fight in him to push back against the solid form trapping him against a wall. It took more than he had expected to get the snapping beast before him on the ground, only a few minutes later does he realize that there was shards of a broken vase littering the ground around where they were.

Randall Teir- Will's snapping beast and Hannibal's failed project laying flat on it's back. Will kneeling on top of it, the shift of power going from this snarling thing beneath him to Will himself. His fists curled tightly and all Will could see was Hannibal.

Anger curled in him and it was enough.

Fists collided with flesh, bone and at times metal. But it didn't stop Will, the pain didn't stop. Not even the burning of tears as everything seemed to spill out. Will didn't utter a single word but it was all there. With every hit.

Blood present, covering his knuckles and the now silent beasts face.

It wasn't until he had no energy left that reality struck home. Not a single breath could be felt beneath him and in the distance there was the sound of a door being unlocked.

Hannibal was home and Will was kneeling over a body.

He had just killed someone. Beat them to death in Hannibal's house under a test designed by Hannibal. Will didn't move as footsteps came his way, didn't move as he saw Hannibal standing not even five feet away and looking oddly pleased.

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Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry it took so long to update this, I had to figure out where I was going with it without my original notes and then had to decide if the ending I had originally planned fits. It doesn't, but that's okay because I have something better planned in my head for this story.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

> Safe to say that I'm focusing on this favourite show again. My mind and ideas are flowing easier for it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will hadn't realized that Hannibal had moved until one of his wrists were caught in a light grip and carefully examined, his hand held as though it could crumble and fall through Hannibal's fingers if he wasn't careful enough. The touch was near reverent as fingers hovered over broken skin and swollen knuckles. Will's other hand received the same careful attention. And Will, Will was still trying to process everything.

Still knelt over the slowly cooling body of Hannibal's failed project. Hannibal – the Chesapeake Ripper crouched next to Will. If a word was spoken now whatever spell that has fallen around them will be broken.

And yet, Will had to speak. But what could he say, his thoughts were rapid, and his mind oddly blank. It was a dizzying sensation. The threat of a panic attack all too real and yet so far away. Will was on uneven ground, and he didn't know where to begin to find his footing.

Grasping at words, struggling for the right one Will eventually settled on, “Hannibal.” It wasn't Doctor nor was it Doctor Lecter. Will had used his name, and in this situation as bizarre and off-kilter as this one. It fit.

Gently shushed, Will found himself pulled to his feet. Not having it in him to fight, to throw accusations or collapse in on himself over the fact that he just beat a man within an inch of his life and stealing the last of it away with a snap of the neck, Will walked with Hannibal quietly. Soon finding himself in the kitchen and sitting at the kitchen island. It was now that he noticed how his body ached, letting him know he had injuries and was possibly covered in bruises.

How will this be explained away?

“Hannibal.” Will repeated, only to be silenced as his hands were tended to with such reverence that Will didn't know what to do with. So he let it happen. Didn't try to speak or fight as his hands were gently dried and tended to. Bandaged and held for a moment longer than necessary.

It was now that Will felt eyes on him, Hannibal not hiding his admiration.

It was enough for something to break in Will and the floodgates to open.

“You sent him to kill me! Let him in.” Accusation coloured Will's voice and anger sharpened his words. A test. A test, but for what? What was Hannibal testing, who was the stronger one? The better killer?

No.

“Yes.” Hannibal admitted it hurt to hear that. Hurt worse than Will wanted to admit to, despite how sore he was Will put distance between himself and Hannibal. Trying to ignore how sore Will now felt. How every hit he took was catching up.

“Why?!” Will demanded, what did he do to deserve this? Will wanted to cry and shout and shatter the walls around them to bury everything, so he didn't have to deal with any of this any longer.

“You know why.” Hannibal's rebuttal was blunt; the unspoken part was a reprimand directed at Will for being obvious and not figuring or knowing the answer himself. You're smarter than this, it would say in a manner. And Will was.

“A test.” Will spat out.

A punishment?

“Is that it?” Hannibal asked, telling Will to keep working at it. Calm steps towards Will but leaving room between them. Will forced himself to focus on Hannibal. Meet his eyes and hold them.

“No.” Will managed. It wasn't a cure, treatment or something for Will to break. It was none of that, and it was all of it. A door that had to be opened with fists and blood. A door that Will himself didn't choose.

“You know why I gave you the answers to this case, Will. Now tell me why did I send him to die.” Hannibal's voice slipped through even as Will turned away. An apology, the case was an apology. And this, test wasn't that.

Will closed his eyes and played the night over in his mind. Backwards and forwards, making sure he caught everything that needed to be seen and known. How he felt. What happened and how it happened. And then Will put himself in Hannibal's shoes, shoes that fit far too well to be comfortable. The bellowing of his monstrous stag heard in the distance.

“I know why.” Will said in a near jubilant and distraught voice. He does, it was laid out perfectly clear on the table for Will to see. To know. Blunt, even more so than the obvious signs on who Hannibal was that no one caught and perhaps no one will.

Will turned around, regarding Hannibal. Pushing his hurt and anger aside, because he knows why. It doesn't make it okay. It doesn't fix things. But he understands.

“You gave me the answers to the case, without making me work for it on the stage you set. That was an apology, but this. This was a test and punishment at heart, Randall Teir had thought it was a test for him only. A test to prove himself to you, his master. But it wasn't. It

was for me... and a -" Will stopped for a moment, collected himself and nearly laughed at the absurdity of all of this before continuing, "- a reward, a reminder. It was that as well."

Shoddy therapy if this was Hannibal's idea as a bandage over everything.

Will took a step forward, he could reach out and touch Hannibal if he wanted to. Will met the other man's eyes and watched as they reflected Hannibal's barely concealed approval.

Taking a life, fighting for his own life wasn't a cure. This wasn't a situation that will suddenly end the temptations or have him grasping and fighting for life continuously in the future.

But -

But Will didn't think or feel like it was intended to be. Both he and Hannibal are fully aware that everything will come back, taking down the creature cooling upstairs isn't a permanent solution. Hunting down others, won't change anything either. But neither is a blade across his wrists.

So Will was at an impasse. And he had to decide on what path he takes. Because there was several and most end with a bleak future or his death. There are ones that might turn out better for him; those ones frighten him the most.

Trying to decide on what path to choose and whether the risks and rewards are worth it was enough to make Will feel like everything was going to close in on himself. The safest place was inward. And it was calling to him. Beckoning him closer.

A hand on the side of his face, warm and consuming pulled his attention along the arm to the only one here with him Hannibal.

"Don't go in, Will. Stay here, with me." Hannibal always was the one who could spot Will receding into his mind; no one else seemed to catch on. Will wanted to hate how he clung to those words, he truly did.

"You can't hide from this, you have to face it. And I can help you do that." Hannibal continued, hand still firmly in place against the side of Will's face.

Unfortunately, Will didn't get to say anything that would either damn him or trap him. There was a knock on the door, and Will watched as warm eyes turned cold and harder than stone. The eyes of a predator and Will remained silent, stood where he was and watched as Hannibal headed towards the door. Answering it in a false welcoming voice.

The voice that answered was unmistakable. Jack.

That impasse was back, and Will knows that he had moments, perhaps seconds to pick one. Pick a future for himself. This time, Will knows that Jack will believe Will. That Jack would go upstairs if Will told him to. Jack would forgive Will for being the instrument in Randall Teir's death.

And yet, Will tucked his hands out of sight as Jack came within view. He couldn't hide any other sign that he was in a fight. Jack didn't see Will, didn't look into the kitchen. If he

wanted to, Will could call out to him. Point Jack upstairs. Point Jack to the proof he so desperately wants, so badly that he was willing to put Will in a gilded cage with the one who initially hurt him and framed him and betrayed his trust.

Jack's back was turned towards Will. Hannibal was out of sight altogether. Two people Will had to choose from. Two higher than life people, loud and noticeable and all-consuming in different ways.

And Will, he was at the end of the road with a choice he had to make. Jack or Hannibal.

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Chapter End Notes

So who do you think Will should pick, or will pick? Either way, the endgame can end as Hannigram.

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